

THE
VICAR of BRAY:

A
T A L E.

V O L. II.



L O N D O N:
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C H A P. XVII.

MISS Sidney passed a sleepless night, from the complicated distress of her situation. To publish the methods by which she had been betrayed into the Vicar's power, would, indeed, secure her from all reflexion; but would it be in the smallest degree to redress her injuries? Perhaps, wretch as he was, he might have some story to tell, to destroy her in the opinion of her

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new

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new-made friends, and it could never be said to deceive them, if she spared them the mortification of knowing that the late Earl of Windham was the cause of all her misfortunes. This last article operated so forcibly upon her imagination, that she, at length, conceived herself bound not to infringe the laws of hospitality so far, as to wound the hand that saved her.

Miss Louisa early enquired after her afflicted visitant, and hearing she had been up some time, went to her apartment to re-assure her of kindness and protection. Those tears! those tears! my lovely girl, said she; is there no possibility of wiping them away for ever?—Can you teach me the means?—For my part, I have lived some years in the world, and seldom know what dissatisfaction is. My maxim is a most simple one; suppose you adopt it. Whatever I find unpleasant, I resolve to make

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make profitable; and whatever I feel to be profitable, I never fail to render pleasant. The poor Clara was preparing to make some reply, when a coach driving into the court-yard.—It is my brother and sister, said the lively Louisa: they do not observe fashionable customs, and are come to take a breakfast with us. If you can resist their eloquence, I must quite give you up, for they were never yet known to soothe in vain.

Lord Windham listened to Louisa's account of her new acquaintance with pleased attention; though he, at the same time, asked her, if she did not think there was a good deal of romance both in her conduct and Mrs. Westly's.—So, because, said he, you find a creature totally devoid of friends, you give her credit for infinite merit; and because she is a fugitive, receive her into your habitation.—How will this tell, Louisa, in the great circle?—You ought to have spurned

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the miserable, and the unprotected; your heart should have resisted all the pleadings of youth, of beauty, of suffering innocence; and, as a proof of your humanity, charity, and innumerable other virtues, the wretched unknown should have been thrown back on an unpitying world, and left exposed to all the melancholy, the fatal consequences of desperation.

Whilst Lord Windham was speaking, Lady Windham having taken up a pocket-book that lay on the window, and opened it, without being sensible of what she was about, said, Bless me, here is a bank note for a hundred pound; what careless person can it belong to? Lord Windham hastily caught it from her hand.—Good heavens! cried he, What do I behold?—It cannot—Yes, it is the very note I gave my most valuable Sidney on my leaving Geneva; I know it well by a peculiar endorsement.

ment.—Where is this lovely girl, Louisa?—But why am I thus affected? His darling child did not long survive him.

It was enough that her husband was disturbed for Lady Windham to be exceedingly interested. Will you see her, my dear, said she, and enquire?—Louisa, with the amiable parade of goodness, led them immediately to the chamber she had just quitted.—You must not let us disturb you, said she, as she entered; we are only friends, and you shall treat us as such. I have made my brother and sister acquainted with all that is necessary for them to know, except for your own sake, and they are come prepared to love and serve you.

The sight of a man so tenderly esteemed by her father, would have greatly agitated Miss Sidney under any circumstances; but reduced, as she was, to an almost criminal standard; if married at

B 3 all,

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all, which she now, for the first time, began to doubt ; the wife of a monster, who had only given her that title as the best trap for innocence and virtue, was beyond measure insupportable to her ; and the faintings with which she had been seized on discovering the Vicar's baseness, returned upon her with so much violence, that her life was absolutely despaired of. Nothing could equal Lord Windham's distress upon the occasion : they were the features of his friend ; and, however unaccountable, that she should be raised from the dead, or that he should have been so imposed upon, the effect his presence had produced, convinced him it was the little Clara. As it was impossible for him to be serviceable to her in her present exigence, and his impatience to learn some certain information concerning her was very great, her ladyship prevailed upon him to take a ride back to town, and make the Vicar a visit, promising him

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him that no tenderness or assiduity should be omitted to support and console her, and, lest recollection, or a knowledge of their suspicions should hurt her, that they would avoid all interesting conversation until he prescribed what was judged best.

The Vicar was taking his chocolate with the composure of probity, when Lord Windham arrived. He was surprised, but had no idea of being alarmed at his early return, except that he perceived there was an anxiety, an inquisitiveness in his aspect which was very unusual to him.

Lord Windham did not keep him long in suspence.—Arundel, said he, I believe you love me; that you have rendered me some very essential services I shall ever be most ready to acknowledge; but tell me, why have you betrayed the child of my best friend?—To describe

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the horror or confusion of Mr. Arundel's countenance is utterly impossible.—The too compassionate Lord Windham beheld him with concern.—I am, perhaps, very abrupt, added he, but afflicted and apprehensive I cannot deal in compliment. Yet do not imagine that I mean you a personal charge. My unhappy father! have you not been faithful and fatally indulgent to his vices? is not the unhappy girl undone?

The Vicar revived, and with his peculiar dexterity, improved the hint his lordship had furnished him with. The dead could bear no evidence against him; and having informed himself of the wretched Miss Sidney's proceedings, he had the confidence to give it as his advice, that the only way to save her from mortification, was to suffer her to imagine she was unknown to them. She has the nicest of sensibilities, added he, and could never support herself if
she

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she conceived her misfortunes were public. For my part, I will spare her to the utmost; she and I will never have the confusion of a rencounter. And my dear sir, as she possesses a thousand virtues and accomplishments, let her ever find a sheltering friend in you.

Lord Windham pressed the villain's hand.—Clara Sidney, said he, wants no advocate with me. If my whole fortune could restore her to the state in which her father committed her to the protection of mine, I would freely part with it all.—Unremitting tenderness shall, however, accomplish all that unremitting tenderness can accomplish.—My departed father,—how dreadful the thought!—a trusting friend, now bearing testimony against him above!—and the child, that was dearer to that friend than his existence, a living monument of *his* injuries, and Lord Windham's guilt.—But I will bear it all,

B 5 and

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and make the *only*, the *poor* atonement
within my power ; preserving her heart
from every future pang.

The Vicar, though he congratulated
himself upon his address and invention,
had some little shudderings for their
success ; but, having cautioned his
lordship at parting, not to betray himself
by too great attention, as he was satisfied
so much of the unfortunate girl's *peace*
depended on being deceived, he was
obliged to leave the event to fate.

Lord Windham had been only a few
hours absent, when the ladies were
agreeably surprised by the rattling of his
carriage. Louisa ran out to acquaint
him, that the dear Clara was recovered,
and to introduce him a second time, in as
prepared a manner as possible.

Miss Sidney had now the courage to
look up ; and as Lord Windham was

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unable to meet her eye, she gradually became more and more composed and assured. My dear young lady, said his lordship, in the best accent he could assume; if you think yourself in the smallest degree obliged by the little attentions you have experienced, I can tell you how most amply to repay them.

—Never remember them again.—Let us look upon each other with the kindness of a long established friendship; we have no impertinent curiosity to gratify. Your appearance is our security, and until we have reason to alter our good opinion, I can answer for Mrs. Welsy's receiving you as a daughter; our Louisa's beholding you with the partiality of a sister. The ladies warmly joined in this request.—But is there not something of disingenuity, demanded Miss Sidney, in every species of concealment? does it not seem to carry a mark of guilt along with it? And yet it is only from not

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being guilty that I have a wish to be indulged in my reserve. I could communicate what would affect you all to hear, without the least use to any party; for my misfortunes are irretrievable ones.

Lord Windham sighed from a double motive. He would have given worlds to know her innocent; but, believing it impossible, was inconceivably hurt by the insinuation. Her person, said he, mentally, has not only been violated, but her mind vitiated. How little does the language of deceit agree with the exquisite ingenuousness of that aspect!—My friend!—my father!—But reflexion is distracting.

The Vicar had the satisfaction to learn from Lord Windham, that he had not mistaken his cue, for that Miss Sidney's whole composure was apparently

parently hinged on the flattering idea of her being a stranger. This success exceeded even Arundel's own expectations, and his mode of thankfulness was, to determine to pursue other equally unworthy schemes with similar dexterity.

He now set about his new project of getting himself made Bishop of Bath and Wells, and having obtained the consent of the King, he sent to the Pope, who, however, would not grant it, without first obtaining the assent of the Cardinals, who were then assembled at Rome. Arundel, however, was not to be daunted by such a difficulty, and, therefore, sent to the Pope, and told him that he had a secret way of getting what he wanted, and that he would tell him all about it if he would give him a safe-conduct to go to Rome.



The Pope, however, would not give him a safe-conduct, and, therefore, Arundel sent to the King, and told him that he had a secret way of getting what he wanted, and that he would tell him all about it if he would give him a safe-conduct to go to Rome. The King, however, would not give him a safe-conduct, and, therefore, Arundel sent to the Pope again, and told him that he had a secret way of getting what he wanted, and that he would tell him all about it if he would give him a safe-conduct to go to Rome.

C H A P.

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C H A P. XVIII.

MRS. Davenport, by her very *lively* management, having rendered her home not only hateful to her husband, but uneasy to herself, was desirous of varying the scene; for which purpose she engaged Mrs. Windham to propose an excursion to Scarborough: and as Mrs. Windham had sufficient discernment to mark the favourable times and seasons of her husband's humour, she immediately applied for his permission, and as immediately obtained it.

Nor was his consent all that he bestowed. He presented her with a handsome bank note, for the indulgence of her wishes, with respect to dress and elegance; and having taken a polite leave, not a little rejoiced in the idea of her absence. Mr. Windham affected the character of a domestic man; confe-

consequently, could not be supposed to be very happy in a solitary situation. And, as it was the Vicar's study to promote the satisfaction of his patron, it could not be deemed a strained civility, to invite him to spend his whole vacant hours at his house ; an invitation which he condescended to accept, and took up his residence accordingly at Mrs. Arundel's.

The ladies, now freed from restraint, were resolved to gratify their taste for dissipation to the utmost ; they played with spirit, danced with elegance, and conversed with that easy assurance that ever distinguishes the woman of fashion from the vulgar.

But Mrs. Davenport far out-went her companion in the walk of gallantry. She not only excited but encouraged the most daring designs in her admirers, whilst Mrs. Windham, who was an accidental

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accidental rather than a constitutional votary to gaiety, had a rule of conduct which she was incapable of transgressing. Yet such is the perverseness of mankind, that notwithstanding they were sure to be repulsed on any bold advance, where one approached Mrs. Davenport with admiration, half a dozen were ready to lay themselves at Mrs. Windham's feet. She had, however, no view in her conduct to any such effect, therefore was far from understanding its meaning; whilst her more experienced friend was unable to suppress an occasional pang of envy, and of self-condemnation. A gentleman, who persuaded himself, that he was really in love with Mrs. Windham, and finding all his attempts to recommend himself fruitless, at last hit upon the expedient of attaching himself to her companion, in order to have an opportunity of discovering the true reasons of her inaccessibleness. Mrs. Davenport exulted in

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in the conquest; but though Mrs. Windham had not sufficient resolution to despise indiscretion, she was too un-designing herself to be suspicious of others. She therefore very artlessly contributed to increase the admiration she was wholly unconscious of, and fixed an enemy where she ought to have found a friend. Such was the situation of affairs at Scarborough, whilst Mr. Windham was enjoying his days in an equally censurable manner: he had indeed been only a short time at the Vicar's, before Lady Windham thought she perceived something very extraordinary in his behaviour; he approached her with confusion, addressed her without meaning, yet quitted her company with visible reluctance.

But if he had not thought proper to explain himself, his assiduity had been for ever misunderstood by her.—A married woman's being addressed upon the

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the subject of love, was the last thing that could have entered her imagination. The time for undressing her did, nevertheless, by the good management of Mrs. Arundel, arrive; but the liberties Mr. Windham ventured to take, though they produced the utmost displeasure on her ladyship's part, were only meant as the first openings of his design. She insisted upon quitting the Vicar's family immediately, nor would be appeased until even her lord's return.

The Vicar, who was not unapprized of what was to happen, now very opportunely made his appearance, and bowing respectfully, addressed her in the following terms: Had I a woman of less understanding to deal with, I would not act the part I now do; but Lady Windham *can* distinguish between the offending and the unoffending object. Whatever may have happened in my house to discompose you, I shall ever feel

feel with the deepest concern ; but, let me beseech you, madam, by my long proved friendship for your lord, that I myself may have the honour of restoring you safe to his protection ; for though I may be compelled to condemn my patron, or my wife, for I find she is considered by you as an instrument, in the affront you have sustained, I must be anxious for an opportunity of exculpating myself, where it is so essential to my happiness to be held in esteem.

The air of candour and sincerity, which accompanied this speech, was not to be resisted by the innocent, the unsuspecting heart. Her ladyship was prevailed upon to sit down, until a servant, which that honest gentleman pretended to dispatch for the purpose, should find her lord, and acquaint him she wished to see him.

Mrs.

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Mr. Windham, and Mrs. Arundel, though excluded from a share in this interview, were not long uninformed of its having taken place, and most sincerely congratulated themselves on their escape; for they had not the smallest doubt, but the Vicar's eloquence, with twenty other already celebrated accomplishments, would be able to fettle the point to their entire satisfaction. The Vicar's success ever out-went the conception of his friends: he insensibly drew a confession from the artless Lady Windham, of all that had passed between her and her relation; on which, he begged leave to make a few comments. Your exquisite feelings has, I find, madam, said he, magnified a natural incident into an unwarrantable attack. Could it then be surprising to you to hear, or improper for Mr. Windham to acknowledge an admiration, a tenderness, that all the world have long since been acquainted with? Believe me, quite the reverse. To have suppressed

suppressed the acknowledgement, would have been alone to mark it with guilt. In the confidence of his own integrity, and in the confidence of your superior judgement to the rest of your sex, he had not an idea of guarding from your ear, what he had published to every ear besides ; and more particularly and repeatedly, to that of your husband. You can, my dear madam, safely rely on that husband's determination. If he acquits, will you condemn ? Allow me to observe, that the retirement in which you have been bred, and the sweet simplicity of your nature, makes it no less necessary than happy for you, that it is in your power to appeal to what you will deem an unerring tribunal. I must, however, caution you, (presuming on the friendship I bear you) that, in justice to yourself, to Mr. Windham and his lordship, your report should be a dispassionate one. Look back, if you

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you can unwounded, to every little circumstance?—Was premeditation obvious? was Mr. Windham's behaviour in any degree offensive? or were his professions incompatible with the regard, strengthened by alliance? If, on examination, you cannot positively charge him with the one or the other, be assured, your nice sense of things has, for once, betrayed you into an error. I know my patron well; I know him incapable, not only of actual, but intentional impropriety. What did he profess? what did he solicit? To love the most accomplished of women, and to be allowed to acknowledge it with impunity? And let me ask, where is the distinction, that one language should not be employed, whether approbation, kindness, reverence, or gratitude, is the question? We refine, my dear madam, till we lose ourselves; but I will not anticipate. Lord Windham will enlarge your sentiments,

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timents, and teach you a better knowledge of life and mankind, than you are at present capable of.

Lady Windham, though not convinced, was exceedingly distressed by the Vicar's arguments. It could not be denied that there was an appearance of accident in the whole affair, and Mr. Windham's expressions such as Mr. Arundel had described them; and yet, he had talked of hope, of indulgence, had knelt to her, and boldly seized her hand; all of which, she held highly unsuitable to the treatment his friend's wife might have expected. But then, it occurred to her, that the last particulars were the consequence, not the cause of her displeasure: for that a desire of satisfying her, and obtaining her pardon, had alone reduced him to the situation she disapproved. In a word, her confusion was so great, from the bare possibility of her having made herself

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herself absurd by strained constructions, that she, for the first time, dreaded meeting the husband of her affections.

The Vicar penetrated the most secret agitations of her mind, and, with peculiar art, sought to find his account in them. It is an unhappy, however innocent an affair, madam, resumed he, as if suddenly breaking from deep meditation. Mr. Windham and his lordship, have never yet known the smallest interruption to their amity. Men of the most rational turn, are frequently surprized into disagreeable things; and, should Lord Windham conceive that his wife's feelings are his only criterion, may not two valuable lives become the forfeiture?

What have you said, sir, exclaimed Lady Windham, with the greatest emotion? what have you now insinuated? Rather than such an evil should be

brought into the bare hazard, I will take up my opinion of the matter wholly upon your credit; henceforth believe, that I was too much alive for the provocation, and even look upon your patron again with friendly regard.

I am sorry, madam, replied the Vicar, with well dissembled concern, to see you so disturbed by a casual observation. I only hinted what has often happened in cases of this nature; but you know the serenity, the forbearance of your lord's disposition: he will not see things through a false medium, unless indeed he should be unable to reconcile himself to —

No more, no more, sir, I beseech you, cried her ladyship. You have, Mr. Arundel, essentially served me on more occasions than one, and you shall now save me from every alarming contingency. I never yet played the hypocrite; but hypocrisy, where my husband's life is

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concerned, can never be a vice. I will, therefore, endeavour to recover myself, and all that has passed shall be buried in everlasting oblivion.

Never was feast of falling innocence more delightful to the fiends of darkness, than this resolution of Lady Windham's to my uncle's soul. A secret is an engine of the most unlimited utility in the hands of masculine art: a secret is the most dangerous of deposites in a masculine bosom; nor is it possible to guard against its operations. One page then, at least, in the Vicar of Bray's history, shall contain an useful lesson. Let the heart of innocence itself tremble at the bare idea of furnishing even the best of men with so formidable a weapon. There are a variety of incidents in life, that nothing but an air of mystery, an ill-judged concealment can point improperly; and there are a variety of minds that are honest no longer than they

they are secured from temptations.—What is called love, is capable of many different tinges; mortified pride, disappointed expectation, and dire revenge, flow all from the same soft source. No farther illustration can therefore be necessary; for, if mankind cannot effect a purpose favourable to their own wishes, by playing off so unhappy an advantage, they may fix an everlasting stain upon the purest reputation. Mr. Arundel knew too well the consequence of his acquisition, not to look forward with exultation; and, instead of having a substitute, as he had at first deemed necessary, he now thought himself qualified to take whatever steps his infernal genius might incite him to, in his own proper person.

C H A P. XIX.

M R. Windham, who, like the Vicar, had a natural turn for mischief, *alias* gallantry, felt some regret on this disappointment, from Mrs. Davenport's absence. She had an agreeable person, and very uncommon vivacity to charm ; and, what was still a more abundant recommendation, under his present circumstance, an accessibleness, that he highly approved. She was, however, far beyond his reach, and he was compelled to submit.

Mrs. Davenport, ignorant of his lordship's very friendly sentiments towards her, found her vanity most satisfactorily flattered by a much inferior conquest. A plausible dressy Prattling puppy was her everlasting attendant ; and *à-la-mode de Paris* was admitted to her toilet.

But

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But his views were levelled rather at her purse than her person ; except, indeed, when he found himself reduced to accept the one, to supply the deficiencies of the other. Lady Windham, however, generally paid for all. She ventured to draw more than once, with a tolerable grace, upon her husband ; who, with the most uncommon generosity, honoured her bills at sight, and never once dealt her out the remotest hint of disapprobation.

But the truth was, he did not wish her to return ; his chagrin on the one hand, and a little affair the Vicar had provided for him on the other, rendering her absence, a very pleasing circumstance : and he well knew, there was no answering that purpose but by *enduring* a rather more than ordinary expence, where his lady's provision was concerned.

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And yet, we shall have no great reason to accuse him of want of oeconomy, if we remember, that what was spent at Scarborough was spared in London.

His lady out of town, he had nothing to do with routs or drums, unless to frequent them ; but as his lady was not acquainted with his secret springs of action, she was delighted and astonished at every additional instance of his indulgence and good humour.

The Vicar, who was the most indefatigable of his species in vice, had discovered in a neighbouring parish, a poor old woman, and her daughter, that with difficulty picked out a livelihood by washing and plain-work. The girl was about two-and-twenty, and perfectly agreeable in her person ; no wonder, therefore, that Mr. Arundel should think her worth the pursuit ; but as it was apparent,

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apparent, that decency and virtue were her governing principles, he found that his steps must be cautiously taken. Having tried various methods to introduce himself, without success, he, at last, gave his patron an intimation of the prize, and it was this noble business that employed his thoughts, and opened his heart to his wife's demands: A very noble business for a venerable minister!

The good creatures were inconceivably happy in their newly obtained friend. A set of shirts were very expeditiously completed by this daughter of industry; and the accruing advantages employed in the most pious work.—Hard times had obliged them to part with their feather-bed; and, though youth, health, and innocence, could find repose from the hardest accommodations, the head of age, the limbs of infirmity, were incapable of resting so miserably. Pleasure sparkling in her eyes, this affectionate

C 4 child,

child, immediately on her little success, procured a softer couch for her beloved parent, and with redoubled satisfaction occupied her bed of straw, and slept most happily.

This was the prey these wretches of *amour* had in view: they disdained going out upon the highway, or being guilty of petty frauds; but to rob the innocent of their peace, the poor of their most inestimable possessions, virtue, was to be men of *gallantry* and *spirit*, and who could condemn them? But Heaven thought fit to interpose!—The amiable girl, by some extraordinary accident, was cast in the way of Lord Windham's steward; who, charmed with her simplicity, and feeling himself, by degrees, tenderly attached to her, resolved to overlook the article of her poverty, and give, at least, two worthy hearts the blessings of plenty and tranquillity.

With

With this generous resolution, he waited upon them ; and, concealing the real advantages of his situation, asked the young woman, if she could consent to unite her fate to his ; and the old one, if his proposal met with her approbation. Tears of honest joy stood in her eyes ; I have long, said she, wished my girl to find a protector ; if you are well-principled and humane, what have we more to ask ?—Enured to labour, she will not refuse her portion of industry to procure a livelihood ; but, as for me, I have only prayers and blessings to offer, in return for the dead weight of my provision. I should not, however, mention this circumstance, if my affectionate Patty had not a hundred times declared, that nothing should prevail upon her to desert me in my second infancy. Nor shall you ever be deserted, said the good-natured lover, whilst I exist, though you was even to lose your daughter. I have an uncommon reverence for old age ; yet,

C 5 give

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give me your child, and I will hope to merit your confidence.

In every renewed visit, this worthy-minded young man discovered some additional perfections in his humble mistress : he knew her filial piety, her neatness, and the air of sincerity that accompanied her expressions and actions, would be infinitely pleasing to his lord and lady ; but, how to contrive for them to see her, unawed by a knowledge of their dignity and superiority, he was wholly at a loss : which knowledge must infallibly deprive her of her best graces.

But as Lord Windham was the friend and father of his domestics, his steward, hemming himself into courage, one day ventured to intimate his wishes. His lordship smiled, commended his taste, and applauded his ambition of having his lady's opinion, promising to use his interest in his favour.

He

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He could not have obliged Lady Windham more; she had a peculiar pleasure in beholding the uncorrupt manners of the species, and conversing with the innocent on terms of equality. She and her sister Louisa agreeing, therefore, to slip on white muslin gowns, and appear as elegant Abigails, begged she might be introduced, with her mother, previous to her wedding; an honour on the one hand, and a satisfaction on the other, which Mr. Windham and the Vicar, had they been duly apprised, would have laboured to prevent.

Mr. Portman, for that was the young fellow's name, was the son of one of Lord Windham's tenants, whose advancement was entirely owing to the merit of his character; though, in fact, he was only under steward: for Lord Windham, to enable himself to fulfill all the benevolent wishes of his heart, inspected his own fortune with an almost plebeian exactness.

C. 6 CHAP.

C H A P. XX.

M^R. and Mrs. Arundel's schemes, (for they were generally very sociable in their *malice* whatever they might be in their kindness) thus unexpectedly interrupted, with respect to Lady Windham, it was not long before that ingenious gentlewoman started a new game.—Mercenary and cruel by nature, she existed, or at least only enjoyed her existence, when engaged in diabolical pursuits ; consequently, never was thrown out of one, without forming the train of another; and she had not this time the honour to be in her husband's secrets.

A relation of the fifth or sixth generation, but who, nevertheless, possessed all the happy talents for recommending him to favour, had for some months been courting the kind influence of his cousin,

cousin, Mrs. Arundel.—Mrs. Arundel was always shy when the prospect was unpromising. A young fellow totally unprovided for, was not the kind of acquaintance she by any means affected; but Mr. Martin was calculated to accomplish the purpose he aimed at: with a most exemplary stoicism he sustained all the shocks and discouragements of disregard and overbearing insolence, until a circumstance occurred that opened the Vicar's house and arms for his reception, and procured him the first place in his approbation and confidence.

Mr. Windham, who caught at every twig of intelligence, for enhancing his reputation, and enlarging the conquests of his country, was told by the Vicar, that a relation of his wife's, had received some very important hints from a sensible Quaker, respecting the African coasts; and that it was his opinion and belief, that many singular advantages might be derived

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derived from a well-concerted attack on such places as he could point out.

Mr. Martin was bound to the above-mentioned quaker, by the most friendly, as well as the most grateful ties; had wormed himself with inconceivable dexterity into his secrets; and, on the strength of his consanguinity with Mr. Windham's prime agent's lady, offered him the service of introduction for the communication of his plan, where he was wholly at a loss for introduction himself. Mr. Martin was ordered to be immediately presented to the minister. Mr. Martin was most graciously received; and Mr. Martin, by the assistance of a good memory, and an insinuating address, gave so satisfactory an account of his friend's knowledge of the Africans, their forts, their commerce, and their disaffection towards the French, together with the interest the quaker possessed with a Moorish Prince of South Barbary; that

that he was received into Mr. Windham's train, cabineted on important consultations, and distinguished with the first marks of ministerial favour, the being constituted the tool of every dirty and dangerous enterprize.

Mr. Windham had also many interviews with the honest quaker; derived the clearest, the most perfect conceptions from his descriptions; was convinced, that the English were the delight, the French the aversion of the Moorish provinces; and that they were ready to promote any attempt for the extirpation of the latter. In short, it was from the lights he obtained from the judicious observations of this gentleman, that the African measures were concerted; and, though some few difficulties intervened, yet much more was effected in the first instance, than Mr. Windham's most sanguine expectations had reached; and, by a renewal of the attack

attack some months afterwards, advantages were gained of the greatest utility to the commercial interests of this country.

Mr. Windham was not, however, disposed, on this occasion, to practice his wonted humility, his wonted moderation.—Nothing less than the whole glory would content him : the deserving quaker, therefore, after sharing the danger, the toil of the undertaking, was denied his share in the success ; Mrs. Arundel's relation making it appear to the satisfaction of his patron, that he had not proved himself of the importance he had taught them to expect ; for that the Moorish king, contrary to the promised friendship, the promised assistance, had received him coldly. Consequently, the quaker, though he had pointed out their steps, one by one, as they were taken, and, with amazing judgement, directed and regulated their attacks, was in

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in *no* degree instrumental to the accomplishment of the enterprize. The quaker was accordingly thrown at a great distance, and intimations of the most disrespectful kind circulated against him; but, as it was apprehended, that the severity of his provocations, might rouse him to speak bold and disagreeable truths, a pension of three hundred pounds a year was assigned him, with all the parade of generosity, and the nicest sentiments of honour; whilst Mrs. Arundel and Mrs. Arundel's relation, were allowed to divide the spoils to which he had an undoubted claim.

Mr. Martin's figure was much admired by the ladies in general, nor was his cousin, Mrs. Arundel, blind to its graces: his address flattering, his conversation lively, it was impossible to resist the most favourable impression of him.

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The Vicar's high reaching soul, the imagined dignity of his ecclesiastical character, and the manifold avocations of his political one, rendered him so far unsocial, that his lady was frequently reduced to the necessity of accepting the forced complaisance of the brothers, lovers, or husbands of her acquaintance. In the days of her youth, Mrs. Arundel had been that sort of handsome woman, that the Amazonian Dames would have chose to head a favourite corps. She was fat, florid, strong featured, and her whole aspect *daringly expressive*. A succession of years, and a succession of mortifications, from finding herself eclipsed wherever she appeared, made her enraptured when her cousin Martin tendered himself, which he now did with the most flattering devotion, for her *Cecilbeo*.

Mrs. Arundel and Mr. Martin were, from that blessed period, inseparable : did

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did she visit abroad, had she company at home, was the Vicar detained at the house, or in private councils till the latest hour, her friend never departed from her side, till he arrived.

Her family, indeed, was like every other family under the sun, a little censorious or so ; but what had Mrs. Arundel and Mr. Martin to fear ? Mr. Windham, the first man in the kingdom, was their patron ; the Vicar, whose optics were so constructed as never to perceive unpleasing objects, and whose soul was utterly callous to the tale of scandal, was their support : they bid defiance, therefore, to a malicious world. Had it, indeed, been the custom for people of fashion to be nice in the choice of their company ; had decency, honour, or reputation, been in the smallest degree attended to, Mrs. Arundel must have been less daring, less notorious in her infamy ; but custom, as at the present period,

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period, was abundantly favourable to women of *spirit* if women of rank, though the unhappily erring plebeian would, at the same time, have been hunted from society, for violations of a much inferior nature.

The Vicar, and his highly favoured friend, Mr. Martin, spread out the conquest of Senegal in the most brilliant colours. Who besides Mr. Windham had ever carried the British standard into Africa ? The truth was, that the conquest of Senegal was as timely and as essential for the preservation of the minister's credit, as any he had ever been concerned in. Thick clouds of discontent, in spite of all the Vicar's industry, had gathered around ; but this stroke cleared the prospect, and again restored the idol to its worshippers.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXI.

THE appointed day, Mr. Portmore attended his bride and mother elect, drawn forth to the best advantage, for they were neatness self, in a hackney coach to his lord's.

Mr. Windham had that very morning, according to his calculation, hit upon a means of carrying his point. A handsome sum down, and a small annuity for life—could poverty resist them? And he was congratulating himself upon his certainty of success, when, lo! he happened to behold the object of his wishes falling forth, with no other person than the servant of his worthy relation. He flunk, and was confounded, but recollecting that it was in his power to secure his reputation by a timely retreat, he cursed, and renounced her for ever.

Lady

Lady Windham and Louisa were so well pleased with their visitors, that they could have been content to wave their consequence for a much longer period, to have prolonged the enjoyment of their company; but an unlucky engagement compelled them to sacrifice their inclinations to the ceremonies of life, and they beheld the honest creatures departure with abundant regret. It was, however, resolved, that on their return into the country, Portmore should add a farm to his stewardship, which would intitle his family to the honour of being humble friends to the family of his master—and having indulged themselves in two or three more interviews of the same nature, the wedding was accomplished, and a purse of a hundred guineas, with an account of their proceedings sent by the ladies to the bride, with one of a similar value, from general contribution, to the mother. Nothing could equal their astonishment at the condescension,
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the amazing partiality of the ladies ; for such is the nature of real worth, that, however conspicuous to beholders, it is never discovered by the possessor.

The scene was now wonderfully changed!—Every footstep of care, consequently, every shadow of necessity was banished from their dwelling ; the grateful wife, the fond, the happy mother, lived but to convince their benefactor of their sensibility and principles, and never was husband more completely blessed.

But what are the triumphs of virtue, to those that vice can boast ? Had Mr. Windham's schemes succeeded, pale sorrow, guilt, and unavailing repentance, had blasted the charms of youth ; and the hoary head weighed down in wretchedness to the grave, had there and there only found an asylum.

Mr.

Mr. Windham now received a piece of news that was far from being disagreeable to him ; his wife's constitution began to feel decay, from her vast expansion of spirits ; but as the advances were slow, she called them low-spiritedness, and by endeavouring to expel, aggravated the disease. Mrs. Davenport, whose heart was strangely constructed, derived no small satisfaction from her decaying bloom, and was so far from acting the friendly part, and dissuading her from lavishing her remaining strength on trifles, that she was evermore promoting what she could not but be sensible must prove her bane. Languid and dejected, she was at length conveyed to Bath, from Bath to Bristol, and from thence to the grave. But however thoughtlessly she had lived, she died collected. The abuse of her understanding and faculties, would have sat heavy upon her heart, but from the conviction, that that was not the proper

atonement. She therefore clearly supported her sufferings, considered them as so many merited chastisements, and bowed the head in resignation. She wrote a most affecting letter to her husband, which was thrown upon his toilet unregarded; and would have prevailed upon Mrs. Davenport to read the lesson of instruction in her premature departure: but Mrs. Davenport bid defiance to every idle sensation; in full health, vigour, and vivacity, what had she to fear? And so comfortably callous was her nature, that she closed her once inconsiderate friend's eyes without a sigh.

But her punishment was not far distant; convinced of her infidelity and baseness, her husband at last came to a resolution of casting her off: to which end, he set spies upon her conduct, until sufficient grounds was obtained to justify a divorce; and as she had brought him

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no fortune, her provision was in no degree adequate to her extravagant wishes.

To be *poor* and criminal, is indeed to be despicable.—No longer able to figure away at the card-table, or shine at the ball, her former friends deserted her, judged and condemned her; nor was her aunt less outrageous than the most malignant of them all: not that it was the crime she held unpardonable, but the want of caution and policy. Would she have been surprised, and put it in her husband's power to strip her? No: she thanked heaven, she knew much better than that came to, and that it was but just people should suffer for their folly.

Mr. Windham, thus happily released from every impediment, resolved to look round the great world, for the most eligible alliance; but as it was necessary

necessary to give some small time to decorum, it was consequently necessary, that a few months should elapse before he entered upon that lay.

The image of the lovely Sophia had still possession of his soul; for though his reason was convinced, by her mode of shunning him, how unavailing his pursuit, his love was in no degree diminished. As all men have pretty nearly the same ideas, it is but natural, they should have nearly the same schemes; and it more than once occurred to this son of gallantry, that a little flirting with the worthy Louisa might be of admirable use, and prove a *passe-par-tout* for his frequent visits with the family.

Louisa had, however, so much good sense, in conjunction with her vivacity, that he thought it rather dangerous to attempt deceiving her, and his uncertainty what to fix upon, occasioned him no little

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perplexity. All these noble suggestions were most carefully concealed from the wary Vicar ; for Mr. Windham did not find himself without some remote, some confused suspicions, that he himself was a candidate for the lady's approbation. The Vicar, on his part, from the intricacy of his proceedings, was not without his share of doubts and difficulties ; nor is it possible for those whose dealings will not bear the test of examination, to know any thing of the calm delights that ever await the unenvious, the undefining, and the uninspiring bosom.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXII.

MRS. Westly, becoming too infirm for travelling, and no less unwilling to lose the pleasure of Lord and Lady Windham's company, than that of her Louisa's, was for effecting a general union. I know my good old friend's objection, said she, to the bustles of life; but let me ask, if it is not possible to be as retired within the very smoke, as it were, of the metropolis, as at Wentworth lodge. My house is large enough for the accommodation of us all; at least, I must intreat we may make the experiment: it would be an inconceivable consolation to me, to have my best friends within my reach, but more especially, if I am born to survive my darling boy.—Thou Father of mercies! exclaimed she, perhaps he is already no more!—Louisa never executed a commission with so much pleasure as the one

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she now received. All her little stock of eloquence was drawn forth, to enable her for the future, to indulge the affection of friendship, without violating the filial. It was the best of mothers, from whom she had been so long absent ; and it was the best of friends that she must have forsaken in an hour of infirmity and painful suspense, by quitting Mrs. Westley in her present situation. Mrs. Wentworth's heart was ill calculated for resisting the forcible attack, and her propitious answer was not long unreceived.

Poor Miss Sidney was so happy in the friendship and countenance of the good ladies at Mrs. Westly's, that the soft influence of tranquillity, in spite of all her misfortunes, would sometimes steal her even from herself. The frauds that had been practised against her, she could not but be sensible, were no reproach to her character, or reflexion on her principles ; yet, to have been for years the companion

VICAR OF BRAY.

companion of a deceiver, a wretch, who was, at the same time, the property of another, was a most shocking idea; and so long as she was unable to subdue the melancholy remembrance of her injuries, she found it no easy task to forgive the injurer. She, with astonishment, contemplated the generosity, the benevolence of the minds she had to deal with; to accommodate her so nobly, only for being an object of compassion, and so abundantly soothe her griefs, without prying into the cause: but, however naturally constructed for the most humane attentions, these ladies had a motive for their conduct *towards* her, which she had no conception of.

The joy produced by Mrs. Wentworth's arrival was so universal, that it would have been difficult to point out the related from the unrelated party; and nothing seemed wanting to complete the scene, except the real innocence of the

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engaging Clara, or her having made no false pretensions to innocence.

But thus assembled to their utmost wish, they did not long enjoy the gratification of friendship, before they were compelled to participate its keenest pangs.

The time was come when dispatches were hourly expected from America; consequently, every heart that was particularly interested in them, began to fluctuate between hope and fear, those alternate operations of suspense.—A ship did at length reach the English port; and young Leneston, having rode post for the sad purpose, arrived at Mrs. Westly's before the news transpired.—General Westly, his dearest friend, had expired in his arms.

A letter, in the most pathetic language, the night before the engagement, was delivered

delivered by the general to young Leneston, with a strict injunction, that if he was the survivor, he should himself present it to his mother.—If I fall, my dearest madam, said he, I fall in the service of my country: Can you wish the life that is most valuable to you, to have a more glorious termination?—But I have one duty to perform;—the bearer, receive him as my best legacy: transfer, in an eminent degree, the affection your son could boast to so deserving an object; and when you remember he was the first beloved of your Westly's heart, Oh! let him perform to my mother the tender offices of support and consolation.—It is he that will close my eyes in everlasting peace; do not let him then behold *yours* devoted to unavailing tears, as you esteem the last request of a departed and most affectionate child.

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Lady Windham, beyond measure, sympathized with this afflicted mother ; yet, wiping the tear with precipitance from her cheek, she evermore endeavoured to speak the soft language of comfort ; but Mrs. Westly's affliction, however poignant, was the affliction of reason ; and, though *hardly*, was piously sustained. Heaven had bestowed, and Heaven had recalled the blessing. Was the supreme purpose to be questioned ? Was not the supreme will to be obeyed ? Thus on the infallible *stock* of piety, did she *graft* her resignation, and endeavoured to sink the mother in the character of the Christian. Yes ; my Westly's last request, she would sometimes exclaim, shall be duly honoured ; his Leneston shall be my Leneston ; nor will I require tasks at his hands, that are ill adapted to his youth, or to his humane feelings. In the decline of my days, in the sun-set
of all my felicities, I will, nevertheless,
have

have still a smile for him, a smile of pleasure, and a smile of approbation.

Some affairs of consequence requiring either Mrs. Westly's, or her most confidential friends attendance in London, Lord Windham kindly offered his service; and as his lady intreated she might continue in the country, from being more than ever unfitted for gay scenes, he promised them, that his early return should prove how much dearer he held their company than all the great world could give.

Lord Windham was so affected by Mrs. Westly's misfortune, that in a conversation with the Vicar, he confessed himself more than half a convert to his wife's sentiments, respecting the dissensions of princes. That a couple of individuals, said he, from pride, caprice, or ambition, shall be capable of producing such melancholy catastrophes, is

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repugnant to reason as well as to justice. The worthy Mrs. Westly, continued he, do not her griefs loudly condemn the arbitrary practice? I can conceive what it is to die in the defence of property, liberty, or the lives of those we hold most dear; but to rush forth with the enthusiasm of glory, where the finger of ambition or tyranny may point the way; to break through every tender, every natural tye; to abandon friends, country, and so far subdue that instinctive principle, self-preservation, as to bare the bosom to the knife, or seek a precarious reputation in the *cannon's mouth*, is incompatible with my sentiments of the human character.

The Vicar, whose delight was war and bloodshed, because war and bloodshed were favourable to his pecuniary wishes, took the liberty to dissent from his lordship's opinion. The martial spirit, he insisted upon it, was the most

noble the mind of man could possess, and the self-neglect of the hero, little inferior to divine. What a gratification, said he, must it be to the generous breast, to feel a corroborating testimony to the voice of fame, when hailed the saviour of millions ! War, he observed, was only liable to the common accidents, the common misfortunes of mortality : for was the uplifted stroke to be avoided under the most hospitable roof, or the triumphs of death less frequent in the tranquil city than the field of danger ?

We will, with your leave, said Lord Windham, wave the merits of the cause, and turn our eyes to the probable consequence. What will these dear-bought conquests avail us ? Will they add to the felicities of the rich, or soften the distresses of the poor ? Will they enable us to reduce the national debt, or relieve the weight of intolerable imposts ? Will they

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they contribute to the increase of foreign demands for our manufactures, and give smiles to the countenance of industry? Or will they not rather, when a peace shall be agitated, be bartered for some inconsiderable island, some barren, however extensive track, and add the keenest aggravations to all our preceding evils?

The Vicar did not like the subject, for two most substantial reasons; the apprehension of offending Lord Windham, and the apprehension of betraying himself: he therefore very artfully changed the subject, by observing that politics was too knotty a point for friends to discuss.

The Vicar was a good deal taken up with Lord Windham, as he was without his family, to fill up his hours; and Mr. Martin, having for some time foreseen, that in the nature of things, one

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or other of the agents must at last be the sacrifice, resolved to make use of this opportunity, if possible, to secure himself from danger. For this purpose, he contrived to be ever soothing his patron's ear with reports of his popularity; and, as his descriptive powers were in no degree contemptible, the measure did not fail of its desired utility.

Mr. Windham felt an unusual cordiality stealing upon him towards Martin, which he did not endeavour to check; discovered abilities, which he had never imagined him master of, and would frequently indulge himself in talking of Lady Windham's excellencies, under the sanction of friendship and alliance: confident, that though the Vicar might trace his motives to their true source, Martin could not have the slightest suspicion of them.

But

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But Mr. Martin was not so easily imposed upon ; the darling subject gave too much life to every feature, and rendered his accents too agreeable for him to avoid penetrating the axis of his sentiments : besides, had he been so dull, as not to read the strong characters before him, Mrs. Arundel had whispered sufficient informations.

Convinced this was the case, he had long wished it was possible to render himself serviceable ; for his situation was become by no means an eligible one. His amour with Mrs. Arundel had been rather matter of policy than inclination ; and he no less wanted to extricate himself from the trammels of the husband than the wife, and embark on his own good credit.

Had he possessed more understanding, he had been less equal to the undertaking :
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the mind of understanding cannot descend to the gradations of *cunning*; cannot suppress its susceptibilities; cannot form the dark ambush, and coldly wait the slow advancing opportunity; for *all* which Mr. Martin was calculated; and Mr. Martin's success was well proportioned to his talents.

Mr. Windham sincerely lamented the fate of that hero, from whose valour, prudence and success, he had derived such innumerable advantages; and had it once in actual contemplation to erect a monument to his memory; but, consulting an eminent statuary, magnificence being every thing on such occasions, he found the necessary expences by no means conformable to his wishes; therefore recommended the *due* distinction to the universal care of that country, in defence of which it had been so unfortunately acquired: the country mourned,

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the country applauded; the country venerated, but farther that country did not chuse to advance ; and the noble thought sunk into oblivion.



CHAP.

C H A P. XXII.

M R. Davenport, notwithstanding he was separated from his wife, was in no degree at variance with her relations; and as Mrs. Arundel had not a connexion upon earth, that she was not indefatigably industrious to turn to account, so she sought to work upon his honest nature, to secure his fortune in her family.

She had, indeed, one great chance for success; Mr. Davenport was a man of such *peculiar* principles, that though the laws of his country allowed him to marry again, he could not consider himself as possessed of any such privilege. Lord Windham and he would declaim whole hours upon the subject; all their eloquence tending to prove that however just it was to deliver an individual from a state of injury, no human means could

could possibly dissolve a most sacred engagement, to which the God of heaven had been called upon to witness : or, if such a power was lodged in the hands of the legislature, as to be able to erase the oath registered on high, why was not the poor, as well as the rich, to derive relief from it ? was not the poor man's sensibility as strong ? was not the poor man's little property as consequential ? nay, was not the abuse of his confidence aggravated, by his being incapacitated to pursue his occupation, by bearing the shaft of affliction in his bosom ?

The Vicar would observe, that the cases were in no respect similar ; for admitting, that the poor man's feelings were equally acute, he could never be rendered an adequate object of consideration : the poor man's peace could alone be affected—but without this provision, the first families in the kingdom would be exposed.

exposed to contamination, and the first estates devolve to spurious heirs ; or if the man of distinction, when compelled to take such a step, was childless, would it not be very hard that he should suffer for the guilty ?—It was an honest, an instinctive wish, to leave to our own offspring, our pecuniary blessings. Yet, because unfortunate in our choice, must we be excluded from that highest of human gratifications, the beholding a second self growing up, to supply our dropping off ? This my Lord and Mr. Davenport called argument, not reason ; they insisted upon it, that it was weakening that veneration that ought to be cultivated in the minds of the people for the matrimonial state, when they saw it entered into with so much coldness, and quitted with so little regret ; that it was teaching them dangerous distinctions, at the same time that they were taught to despise the *partiality* of the laws ; and that whilst the rich were allowed

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allowed to make such advantage of his riches, and the poor to receive such flagrant testimonies of the disadvantage of poverty, no wonder the former exulted in their possessions, and the latter considered those possessions as the grand essentials of merit and happiness.

Mrs. Arundel frequently felt Mr. Davenport's pulse, though at an abundant distance, with respect to the possibility of a reconciliation between him and her niece; and finding that impracticable, she turned her abilities upon a new point, engaging him to make a will in her favour.

With this view, her face ever brightened into smiles at his approach, and the eternal acquiescence eternally awaited him. Mr. Davenport had, however, too much understanding to be duped a second time; he had relations of his own, that he resolved should reap the benefit

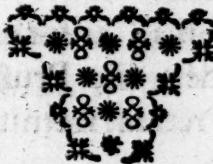
benefit of his disappointment, and very early after his separation, made a disposition of his fortune totally contrary to Mrs. Arundel's schemes ; nor did he conceive it necessary to give her information of a circumstance which he did not conceive it necessary to consult her in the execution of. Love and ambition often produce the same effect upon the judgement ; and as every school-boy can explain the first, I need not explain the last. Mrs. Arundel read his expressions and actions her own way ; mistook an attachment to Lord and Lady Windham, not to mention a secret approbation of Louisa, for an attachment to herself, and placed a thousand civilities and attentions to her own account, of which they alone were the objects.—Of all flatterers the self-flatterer is the grossest, and the most incorrigible ; can the best adapt itself to the peculiar humour, and follow the fickle inclination through all its turnings :

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we ought, therefore, to be doubly guarded against its arts. If Mr. Davenport had never seen Miss Louisa Wentworth, the poor Miss Sidney would have enjoyed *more* than his compassion ; for he had such reputation with the worthy family, as to be intrusted with the secret of her *supposed* misfortunes ; nor would he have hesitated, from motives of humanity, to have parted with half his possessions, to have redressed them. It was frequently with great difficulty, that he restrained himself from breaking out in the bitterest exclamations against her seducer : but the recollection that the seducer was the father of Lord Windham, and that the fair sufferer's happiness depended upon the affected ignorance of her friends, with respect to her circumstances, never failed to rejn in his froward inclination ; but, notwithstanding Mrs. Arundel did not perceive that she was a kind of cat's-paw with Mr. Davenport, she was far from

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from approving his connexion with the Windham family, if she could have devised a method of preventing it; but, as that was out of her power, she was obliged to submit to necessity.



C H A P. XXIV.

IT would be impossible to give a regular detail of public occurrences in this work, or more properly, such an attempt would pervert the whole design ; and, instead of the Vicar of Bray's History, as the title denotes, it would be found to be merely an historical narrative of the late war. Nevertheless, it cannot be inconsistent with the main business, to take notice of the most remarkable events ; as for example, after many vicissitudes, the Prussian hero, on his precipitate retreat from the Russians.

A man in the meridian of success, and a man sunk into misfortunes, is a very different spectacle : in the first instance, not a British voice but declared this monarch more than mortal ; in the latter, he was let down to the commonest standard of mortality. The foibles, the impro-

improprieties of his composition, began to be perceived, began to be canvassed : he was too rash, too impatient, to be trusted with the lives of thousands ; and even his fighting principles were ranged under a new denomination. It was likewise at this period discovered, that Prince Ferdinand did not effect what had been expected at his hands. The advantage of to-day was rendered of little use by the loss of to-morrow ; and many did not scruple to whisper, that he had reasons for wishing the war prolonged, which the Duke of Cumberland would have despised.

Lord Windham was too happy to understand, and too wise to enquire into the meaning of all this inconsistence ; tired of the folly, the caprice of the public, he dispatched his commissions, and eagerly sought an asylum from both the one and the other at Mrs. Westly's.

Mr. Windham, according to his already communicated resolutions, soon made the good family a visit. Miss Sidney's figure was perfectly new to him, and engaged no small portion of his admiration; but, as her name was changed for her better concealment, he had not the most distant recollection of her, nor she any apprehension in beholding him. Another and another visit succeeded, and still the fair Sidney was the apparent object of his admiration. Louisa laughed at the conquest she had made, but obtained no other reply than, Spare me, my dear madam, unless you would wish me to believe you capable of ridiculing the unfortunate.

The obtaining our wishes is, on many occasions, our greatest misfortune. Lord Windham, so long as he conceived Miss Sidney to have no sensibility of her fallen state, was obliged to labour hard for

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for compassionate excuses ; but no sooner was he informed of her return to Louisa's railly, than all the horror of his father's crimes, and all the humanity of his nature was called forth in his heart. He had not, as yet, made her any certain provision ; but now, with the concurrence of his wife, mother, and sister, gave directions for a draught of a settlement to be prepared for two hundred pounds a year, which he intended to keep in his own possession until some fit opportunity should occur for presenting it. Louisa and Mr. Leneston appeared so well pleased with each others conversation, that it was not once doubted, but the result would be agreeable to the wishes of all their friends ; for as Louisa and young Leneston divided Mrs. Westly's heart, a union of their fates would have enabled her, without a moment's hesitation, to complete her friendly work.

But that cross purposes might not be wanting to diversify the scene, young Lenefton's affections were irrevocably fixed on Miss Sidney; and he trembled to perceive Mr. Windham's growing attachment to her. His prospects, except with respect to Mrs. Westly's partiality for him, were wholly limited—a commission, and the generosity of Lord Windham, all he had to boast. Miss Sidney was too ingenuous for him to be ignorant that she was also in a dependant state, and there was nothing to be expected but the forfeiture of every friendship, by persevering in his folly. Wisdom is a mighty pretty thing in theory, but in practice, love and youth find it very difficult; the determination of the night, vanished at the approach of morn; and the revolving hours proyed only so many mementos of his instability, his incapacity for becoming what he ought; until at length, either the nobleness or weakness of his mind,

mind, led him to seek a confidant, an adviser, in the ever lively, the ever good-natured Louisa.

Louisa received his confession without a sigh ; or, at least, if a sigh did involuntarily escape her, it was for his sake, not her own. It was so natural a consequence of his acquaintance with Miss Sidney, to be attached to her, that Miss Louisa assured him, she should have considered his soul as utterly insensible, if it had not acknowledged her power; and yet, continued she, you are acquainted with but half her accomplishments, with but half her loveliness.— She has made no display of either to captivate you. Nay, whatever is the meaning of it, I often surprise her in tears since your arrival; and am convinced, that there is more of sadness than of love in her composition. Nevertheless, if you would desire an opportunity of telling your own soft tale, I will

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not only promise you that indulgence, but if you find yourself successful, plead your cause with the higher powers. Mr. Leneston kissed her hand as a token of gratitude ; when in that instant, the poor Miss Sidney, from accident, broke in upon them, and betrayed inconceivable confusion.

Miserable wretch that I am ! said Miss Sidney, the moment she was alone, now do I begin to feel all the horror of my situation ; Was it for this that my beloved father watched over my infancy with delight ? Was it because that father, from the tenderest considerations, devoted his attention to Lord Windham's son, that I have been thus abused and betrayed ? Or was it from the cruel Earl's being peculiarly sensible of the fond wishes, the fond anxiety of the parental heart, even in the instant it was breaking with the agonies of death, that he could immediately form such a trap for
my

my innocence? Had he stopped there, however, I would still have thanked him; but it was not enough to plot my destruction, to disqualify me for ever becoming an useful or decent member of society, or he would never have ordered my mind, my little abilities, to be cultivated with such nice attention; and have I then learnt to distinguish, to be captivated with the beauties of refinement; to feel the utmost glow of friendship and affection, and to be alive to every dictate of propriety, only to confess myself an unfit object to participate their satisfactions? — The amiable Leneston too has been cast in my way, the more amply to fill up the measure of my misfortunes. What is reason, resolution, or the strongest convictions, when they are unable to secure the heart from tormenting impressions? — The merits of this young fellow ought to be nothing to me: had he a kingdom to bestow, I could not accept it, for I have already

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been united to the worthless : my gratitude, my esteem, were warmly devoted to that barbarous deceiver ; but my love, I find, was reserved for a period when I ought not to feel an agitation beyond self-contempt, or self-compassion.

That Mr. Leneston beholds me with an equal degree of partiality, is no small aggravation of my grief. I could support my own sufferings, but I sink beneath the weight of his : yet, foolish, credulous, deluded creature that I am, I mistake the emanations of benevolence and humanity for a softer passion ; the agreeable vivacity of my friend has engaged his attachment, and I have only to subdue myself to a capacity of rejoicing in their felicity for all yet to be well. If a mind replete with goodness can constitute merit ; if the most uniform and unoffending cheerfulness can charm ; if an enlarged understanding and gentle passions can attract admiration, then

must Miss Louisa Wentworth be infallibly admired. But it is, nevertheless, impossible to restrain the imagination within due bounds ; what does it avail me to contemplate Mr. Leneston's endowments, or recollect the few perfections I was allowed to possess ? I was formed for social, for domestic happiness : to have raised the joy, and mitigated the sorrow of the heart I love, would have been inconceivably delightful to me ; but it is not for me to anticipate the wish, to soften the anguish, or to enhance the satisfaction of friendship ; it is alone my task, to compel my soul to the hard practice of resignation ; and acknowledge, that though the ways of Providence are intricate, they must be just.—The prayers of my father have been denied, and his child shut out from every ray of hope ; yet is that child in the sight of heaven unpolluted, and heaven will, at last, prove her consolation.

C H A P. XXV.

MRS. Arundel, though she could barely write her own name, had her correspondents of the utmost consequence upon the continent; and these correspondents, as was natural, were not long uninformed of the growing discontents, the ungrateful murmurings of the English, from a disappointment of their expectations, respecting the allies. Your Germans are most particularly tenacious of their reputations.—Prince Ferdinand pushed on with precipitance for a lucky stroke; need I relate the rest? Six British and two Hanoverian troops were already engaged; the conflict was unequal, the conflict was severe: but notwithstanding the fate of the day depended upon a timely reinforcement, and Lord G—— S——e, with the cavalry, was only *behind a hedge* at a little distance, he did not chuse to advance;

advance ; the French had so apparently the advantage, that he had *no* doubt, but, even with his assistance, the day would be lost ; and well knowing the English were not, at the best, very favourable to *undertaking*, much less to unexecuting foreigners ; he had the generosity, the politeness to incur the whole blame himself. His conduct, with the consequences, are already enrolled on the immortal record of his country ; I shall not, therefore, enter upon either the one or the other : Lord G—— S—— was sunk into disgrace, Lord G—— S—— was reviled, burnt in effigy, and branded with every opprobrious epithet ; yet did this same Lord G—— S——, at last, come forth as *right honourable*, as if no dark shades had ever tinged his reputation.

The Vicar and Lord Windham had frequent conversations upon the subject. Is it just, his lordship would say, that resent-

resentment should produce what gratitude cannot, some little degree of permanence? Wherever I go, the name of Lord G—— is echoed forth; nor is there scarce a street in which his effigy does not meet my sight.—The death of my poor worthy friend, what public mark of distinction has yet been paid to it?—Shall infamy outlive the most glorious of sacrifices?—O my much injured Westly! the historic page is then alone left to immortalize thy deeds; in the historic page, however, added he, softening his accent, will thy merit be registered, and the humane, the benevolent, the emulative tear of posterity, atone the base neglect of the present generation. The Vicar took upon him to affirm, that it was his patron's intention, to pay all imaginable honour to the general's memory, when he was *forgot* by every other member of the community.—Never tell me, replied his lordship hastily, it is doubly great, it

it is doubly meritorious, to time the work of grateful tribute ; had it been done in the first instance, the heart would have had the credit. I cannot give my approbation to the slow-wrought performance of the political head. Mr. Martin, all this time, supported his little part with amazing dexterity ; he soothed Mr. Windham's ear, flattered his heart, and insinuated the self-complacent idea beyond all that his patron could have hoped. Far indeed had Mr. Windham been from conceiving, that his vacant hours could have been so well filled up by any thing in existence, except his prime agent : but Mr. Windham's astonishment would have ceased, if his sense had been uninfatuated ; he would then have discovered, that it was not Mr. Martin's wit or wisdom that diffused the charm around ; but the reflexion of his own sentiments, the reverberation of his own voice, and the well-directed stroke of *cunning* upon the *foible* of sensibility :

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sensibility : for to deny him sensibility would be no less unjust than to deny him motion.—Nature had been uncommonly kind, uncommonly liberal in his endowments.—It was the misapplication, the perversion of those endowments, that alone rendered him the dupe of his own passions, and the dupe of the most unworthy, as well as villainous inclinations ; nor do I believe Mr. Windham's, by any means, a singular character.

Mrs. Arundel was frequently piqued at Mr. Martin's devoting so many hours to his patron, when she was at leisure to entertain him ; but she was convinced, that there was no contending with the *mighty* ; she was convinced, that her husband would approve what she condemned, as a conduct salutary and essential to all their interests. Mr. Windham perceived, and many times condescended, to obviate the rising dissatisfaction.

dissatisfaction, by presents, by parties, by devices, calculated to dispel the petulance of an unworthy bosom. By Mr. Windham's countenance, for she was devoid of every merit, was Mrs. Arundel a welcome guest, with the well-bred, the high ranked, and best informed females; by Mr. Windham's countenance, not a card party in the whole parish of St. James's, that did not court Mrs. Arundel's participation:—but why do I say, by Mr. Windham's countenance? for it is apparent, that neither merit nor interest is wanting to introduce the most contemptible of each sex, both as to understanding and principles, into the first assemblies in London; provided their finances enable, and their *spirit* impels them to play deep.—Nay, for that matter, is it not reasonable, is it not just, that where all distinctions are levelled, exceptions should be unknown; and that where good sense, good breeding, and refinement, are
useless?

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useless appendages, a deficiency in those articles should not be considered as a disrecommendation or impediment?

Yet, though Mr. Martin had made himself so highly useful to Mr. Windham in private, it was the Vicar's voice alone that could be of public utility to him; he was, therefore, called off from his less popular avocations for the necessary purpose.

But, contrary to his former customs, on finding the minds of the people in a dissatisfied state, did he conceive it the wiser scheme to inflame than mitigate. The over-ruling influence was shewn to them in an undeniable light, and the monarch instead of the minister soon rendered the object of their disesteem; for when once Mr. Arundel set seriously to work, there was no resisting him; as he possessed every engine, every avenue, that could lead his

his master on to fame, to honour, to immortality.

When Mr. Arundel, on some of these occasions, took a view of his own abilities; when he involuntarily fell into a retrospect of all the gradations by which his patron had ascended the pinnacle of greatness, and his vanity whispered, how usefully he had exerted himself; he could almost have been so prophane as to arraign the dispensations of Providence, in placing so extraordinary a man as himself below the zenith of merit and action.

He, in these moments, would conceive, that if he had presided at the helm, things would have been still very differently conducted, both with respect to public advantage, and the advantage of his affesting friends: he would not have suffered a genius, to which he had been so materially indebted, as Mr. Windham to Arundel's, to have languished

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languished in obscurity. A bishoprick, an ample bishoprick should have been its reward. Having indulged this idea for a few successions, it became insensibly established into an absolute expectation, an absolute demand: he resolved, therefore, to work only a very little longer at an uncertainty; but that, as there was a propitious minute with all great men, which if unattended to no success could be obtained, he would watch the golden opportunity, and bid defiance to all apprehensions.—Whilst the Vicar thus balanced matters on the one hand, they were very differently stated by Mr. Windham on the other; for taking all the *foreign compliments* into the account, he looked upon it, that the Vicar was most abundantly recompensed.—As for poor Martin, he would say to himself, he has contributed his portion, and shall not be forgot: the poor Martin had nothing to boast, except the smile of casual approbation, the flattery of

of casual confidence, and the airy hope of *patronic* consideration. Mr. Martin was therefore marked down in Mr. Windham's memory, as a man he meant to serve; though agreeable to the *mode* of greatness, the means and period were equally unimpressed upon it; but who, that knows the gratitude of *ministers*, can once doubt the performance of their *grateful* resolutions? or who, that is acquainted with their love of *justice*, can refuse them credit for every *just* intention? It must, however, be acknowledged, that Mr. Windham was, in these respects, the most peculiar of all ministers: he never failed to improve, he never lost sight of a happy intimation; nor had the *intimator* cause to complain of his generosity, if we except once or twice, that he happened, as in the case of the quaker, to mistake the *false* object for the *true*; but those were merely testimonies that he was a man, for angels cannot err.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXVI.

NOtwithstanding Mr. Windham appeared to be captivated with the lovely Sidney, it was Lady Windham that was the object of his pursuit, and he thought a *little trifling* (to use his own phrase) when it should come to be detected, would be much sooner excused with a stranger, than one of the family, as Miss Louisa might most justly be deemed.

Mr. Leneston, who viewed all his actions through the keen optics of jealousy, was so far from placing them to their true account, that he beheld him as the most formidable of rivals, would have given worlds to prevent his visits; and unrestrained by the judicious advice of the friendly Louisa, would, in all probability, have been guilty of some glaring extravagance.

DAHO

Louisa

Louisa had promised, and Louisa performed that promise with the strictest punctuality, to give Mr. Leneston an opportunity of discovering Miss Sidney's sentiments; whether it was for love or friendship, a concern for Mr. Leneston's peace, or Miss Sidney's integrity, it is impossible to determine; but it cannot be concealed, that the young lady did contrive to over-hear the conversation.

Mr. Leneston's address was too natural to be recorded; the reply he received was as follows:

Sir, the sincerity and politeness which you have practiced, demands, at least, an ingenuous return: had I a heart or person to bestow, perhaps you would not have asked in vain; but neither the one nor the other is within my power. Abused by, I have reason to believe, a sham marriage, or at the best, an illegal

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illegal one ; you now behold a creature, that for years spent a life of unknown infamy. Your astonishment I was prepared for, but your concern affects me nearly : would you have had the woman you could love capable of deceit ? or to what purpose, circumstanced as I am, should I palliate ? It is true, my secret was safe ; the wretch, the only master of it, for his own sake, might have been relied on ; but, notwithstanding the propriety of my intentions, pity is all I can expect to receive, and covered with pity, I would sink into oblivion. Louisa could hear no more : My most noble-minded friend, cried she, your humility, like that mentioned in holy writ, does but tend to exalt you : esteem and applause, with the tenderest sympathy in your misfortunes, are your due ; and, as there cannot be impropriety but from the concurrence of the soul, Leneston and my Sidney shall still be happy.

Hold

Hold, madam, said Miss Sidney, your generosity is hurrying you out of your depth; would you unite an amiable, a nice feeling young man, to so despicable a creature as I must be, if I could accept him? You know but little of your friend; be assured, sir, my sisterly attachment, my approbation, shall always be yours, but I will never, never violate my principles. I have but one thing more to add; I see the wishes of the whole family: might I be permitted, since I am flattered that I possess a considerable share in each of your hearts, might I but presume to direct your choice, Louisa *Leneston* should be my first friend.

Louisa betrayed some little confusion, beyond common sensibility; but Mr. Leneston's eyes spoke how ill he was affected towards the proposition.

My dear Louisa, said Miss Sidney, when Mr. Leneston had left them, I intreat you not to interest yourself in a wrong cause. You would have kindly spared me, if it had been possible, by your indulgence, even the recollection of what I am; but let me make such returns as may secure me from all self-reproach: had I fifty thousand pounds, and the innocence I once could boast, this blush will bear witness how I would dispose of it—but not a word of all this to the ladies within; I would not for worlds prove an interruption to their tranquillity.

Louisa, in appearance, complied with this injunction, but she was determined to leave nothing undone to accomplish the mutual felicity of those she held most dear; and indeed had no doubt, but she should have every one she applied to of her party.

It

VICAR OF BRAY. 99

It puzzled her extremely, only she was apprehensive of wounding the unhappy girl, to comprehend what she could mean by a sham marriage, and the having spent years with the husband of another. Lord Windham could have had no wife since Sidney was born ; but unable as she then was to unravel so knotty a point, she left it to time and her own ingenuity to complete it.

Louisa's good-nature and tenderness were inconceivably exercised ; the amiable lady, Mr. Westly's choice, was drooping almost to despondence on his loss ; Louisa was alone her support and consolation.

Such are the laws of custom and delicacy, that what is a wife's greatest praise shall be deemed a weakness in any other character : yet ought not the affections to be engaged before the hand

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is bestowed, and shall we be denied to lament the object of those affections?

Mr. Windham's visits at Mrs. Westly's, became more and more frequent; his conversation was addressed to Miss Sidney, but his eye would speak an honest language.—The arch Louisa was the first to find him out, and not a little shocked her sister by communicating her discovery.—I would advise you, said she, to give a small matter of encouragement, just to keep him on this side the confines of despair.

You make me shudder, said her ladyship, notwithstanding I am so well acquainted with your principles. I fear I have something more to answer for than you are aware of; and with how ill a grace I shall enter into the relation of a long concealed affront, even from my sister and Lord Windham, I leave that nice-judging sister to determine.

I will

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I will give you a proof of my judgement this instant, returned Louisa. You, my sister, have too much purity to err, and Mr. Windham too much sense to offer a daring provocation; but a little harmless gallantry, you know, is allowable by all the rules of polite life. Nay, why that serious; that face of concern?

This, Louisa, said her ladyship, is too important a subject to be trifled with: perhaps, what you treat so ludicrously, may be the bane of all my happiness.

That is, my sweet sister, replied Louisa, as genteel a mode of calling your husband a fool, as ever I knew in my life: whose veracity, do you think, will he bring in competition with yours? Or what faith shall be relied upon, when Lady Windham's can incur the shadow of a doubt? I will immediately acquaint him with the obligations he owes you, and

F 3 bring

bring him to return his most grateful acknowledgements.

Mr. Windham was just arrived, and now joining them, put an end to their conversation. Lady Windham did not, however, for some time recover the uneasiness of mind her sister's observations occasioned her: friendship and peace were what she delighted in; and for *her* to prove an interruption to the felicity of so many, whose happiness was, in fact, dependant upon her smiles, was not only a very mortifying, but a very affecting reflexion.

Mr. Windham and Mr. Martin had had some interesting chat that very morning, in the course of which, the latter had not scrupled to insinuate to the already more than half suspecting Mr. Windham, that the Vicar had certainly unwarrantable, however distant views upon Lady Windham.

This

This suggestion would have been sufficient of itself, to mark his instant doom, if it had been quite convenient for Mr. Windham to have parted with him, but he had by no means accomplished all the work, in which no man besides the Vicar could be useful to him. He therefore determined to be slow in his operations; and, by a judicious undermining, make the falling structure less regarded. Miss Stanley, the surviving mourner of General Westly, was this day at Lord Windham's. Miss Stanley was that kind of beauty, that shines fairest in tears; her complexion appeared incapable of decay, and the lustre of her eyes only increased by the rising humidity.

Mr. Windham, who was a general admirer of the sex, did not overlook this really engaging lady; he made some little parade of assiduity, called forth one or two glances of dejected attention,

F 4 and

and left the matter to improve at leisure. He had often heard most astonishing reports of Miss Stanley's accomplishments, disposition, and character; her fortune was not then very considerable, but she stood a fine chance for an immense one. He took the point into consideration; now thought of renouncing all attempts upon the woman who had never given him the shadow of an encouragement; but again concluded, to defer his application to the former until he was totally disappointed in his hopes respecting the latter. Miss Louisa, who, from being merely a by-stander upon these occasions, was ever discovering the game, mentioned with great dissatisfaction, after the company's departure, the trifling distinction Mr. Windham had obtained from the sweet daughter of affliction; for my part, said she, I have no notion of a heart's admitting a second impression; well as I love her, for the honour of the females, I could wish her

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to continue faithful to her primitive attachment, though her life should become an absolute forfeit; there is something inconceivably flattering to my imagination in your romantic feelings; the little deity, once an inhabitant, ought never to be banished the gentle bosom. If I had been sufficiently handsome to have attracted the admiration of the Corydon of my election, I should have lived and died unshaken in my truth.

Lord Windham told Louisa, that she had a collection of the most extravagant ideas that ever entered a rational head: you insist upon it, said he, that it is not only derogatory to true delicacy, but a sufficient reason for a man to forsake his adorable, if she only consents to whisper her love, before that whisper becomes her duty; that the girl that will indulge one lover in improprieties, would have no scruple to be equally indulgent to another; and that you should hate

F 5¹ the

the woman that failed in due respect to herself.

Well, said the young lady, and what is there so very preposterous in all this? If you would be honest, I only speak your own sentiments.—I cannot imagine how you masculine folks can have the vanity to expect to be made of so much consequence.—I do believe you are all Mahometans in your hearts, and think us mere machines to soften the inconveniences and improve the satisfactions of your lordly lives. Why now, there is my sister for example; but I will not teach her an evil lesson against you, for I am verily of opinion, that you are one of the most valuable creatures of your whole species.

C H A P. XXVII.

M R. Windham's attention to galantry was interrupted by an important blow: his Majesty George the Second was suddenly taken off; and all his great schemes which he had laboured in maturing, were now in one instant wholly disconcerted. Miserable England! this was the æra that fixed thy wretched fate!—George the Second, was an experienced, a resolute, an ingenuous-minded prince.—It was not the little cabal that could impose upon his senses; it was not the tale of artifice that could deceive his ear: he *dared to judge* for himself, to weigh, to compare, to separate, as occasion required; and above all things, idle prejudice was a stranger to his soul.—The face of things was now quite changed; a new favourite arose to eclipse Mr. Windham's reign; or as he expressed it, the *bear* would,

F 6 though

though all unskilful, steer the *boat* in the full face of the day ; wranglings and resignation were the consequence. Many unpopular acts were passed in the House : a champion for Liberty stood forth ; in short, the kingdom was convulsed by a variety of passions. Mr. Windham's undertakings had been so nervous, their execution so strong, and his reputation so rapid, that it was no wonder he had many enemies, the foible is so natural to the species ; produce me the man that loves to be outshone.

Lord Windham, from real attachment to the throne, and from the general benevolence of his disposition towards all ranks of people, was greatly hurt at the establishment of these new laws. It was, according to his sense of things, to shake the very constitution, by too deeply loading its principal pillars. The indigent, the industrious, he would say, whose necessities even of hunger and thirst

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thirst were alone gratified by a perseverance in labour, required rather additional encouragements, additional mitigation, then to have the cup of refreshment dashed with unapprehended gall. With all the zeal of humanity, he intreated Mr. Windham to exert himself in the cause of justice, in the cause of wretchedness ; made it appear that unless the lower ranks of people had their blessings to preserve, their minds were open to the most dangerous insinuations. Tyranny was tyranny however derived ; nay, it was harder to brook the unkindness of a natural parent, than the sternest oppression of the usurper : he was for princes reigning in the hearts of their people, and for the tenderest feelings being exercised toward them. Mr. Windham saw the full force of his arguments, thanked him for the hint, and gave the exculpating of himself in charge to the Vicar, who so well acquitted himself upon the occasion, that

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to this day he is held blameless by those
he most essentially injured.

Mr. Windham's *love of fame* occa-
tioned him, however, to endure many
fevere pangs in the unequal conflict to
which he was exposed. After having a
long time endeavoured to stem the tide,
and found those endeavours vain, in a
fit of mortified pride, he threw up the
reins, when he was upon the very verge
of obtaining from fear, what was denied
to his remonstrances.

Mr. Windham out of office, Mr.
Windham unrecompensed for his manifold
services, was too irritating a spectacle
to be suffered in the full face of the
sun; yet how to reconcile the *patriot*
to pecuniary rewards, how to prevail
upon him to accept a price for his well-
judged plans, his well exerted eloquence,
and level him with the gross of ministers,
was a nice stroke to accomplish; it was,
nevertheleſs,

VICAR OF BRAY. III

Nevertheless, accomplished, and without much labour. A handsome gratuity actually tendered, required more philosophy than Mr. Windham was master of, to be able to reject it. A little parade, it is true, was practised; his sovereign's request was the *sanctifying seal*, and his receival of it, the *test* of his humility, duty, and loyalty,

Disgusted with courts, and by no means well affected to courtiers, he sought the solitary scene; where, beneath the shade of some fair spreading laurel, he might contemplate his own greatness, and enjoy his self-congratulations, on having steered his bark safe into harbour; but that that retirement might not want its most abundant charms, he contrived to situate himself in Mrs. Westly's neighbourhood, and to have frequent intercourse with her family.

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Lord Windham had great affection for his cousin ; but exclusive of that partiality, he was of opinion, he could never sufficiently honour the man whose public transactions were so universally celebrated, nor sufficiently admire his greatness of soul : in the period of unmerited ingratitude, of unmerited neglect ; in his honest zeal for this *minister*, he could not but behold the favourite who had rose on his ruins with horror, and pitied the k— and kingdom marked down for his prey. Mr. Windham lamented the shock his popularity had sustained by his compliance with the will of his sovereign ; said he had foreseen the motive, though incapable of obviating its operation ; for that, however the purposes of his enemies *might* be answered by his accepting a distinction from his sovereign, his refusal would have been productive of ten-fold ignominy. His sovereign, in the noble generosity

rosity of his nature, believed he merited what had been suggested, only to fix a stain upon his principles; his sovereign had condescended to offer it with such peculiar graciousness, that to have put his own feelings in competition with the satisfaction of royalty, must have exposed him to censure, nor could he have acknowledged the *patriotic* dictates of his soul without having incurred the imputation of a more than *Wolsey* arrogance; he had therefore of the two evils chose the least, and was not without the hope that time would convince all his friends of his prudence and unshaken integrity. My lord entered into his relation's grievances with the most friendly warmth; extolled his conduct on every trying, on every important occasion; but observed, that the mind of understanding ought not to stoop to engagements on the despicable basis, all public engagements were incontestably founded. There is, added his lordship, in the politics of this country

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country some of the most unworthy features; in an hour of extremity, abilities alone become the object of desire; the helm of desperation can alone be trusted to the hands of experience: so far is reasonable, so far is highly natural; but what shall we say for the *man* who *can* consent to wade through all the mire of political chicanery; who can shift the scene as the humour or the nod of state quacks may incline; who, though he is received as the sole contriver, the sole accomplisher of ministerial measures, has only a private game to play, agreeable to prescribed rules from which there is neither appeal nor deviation; who must yield the most noble plan to be contracted, enlarged, or wholly new modelled, as cabal, malignity, or self-interest may point out; who cannot meet even his royal master upon terms of humble friendship; or suffer truths, however important, to reach his ear; who must know himself surrounded by spies, and though

though the idol of to-day, open to the disgrace, the contempt of a succeeding party to-morrow ; who must hear even his wishes and endeavours for his country's advantage, the success of which would sufficiently support him from happy-consciousness under the thanklessness of some and the insult of others perpetually controverted and over-ruled ; and who after years of toil, can have no security against the common fate of the most common ministers, the looking forward without hope, backward with mortification, if not actual remorse ? Are these things, demanded his lordship, in any degree suited to the ingenuous, the rational individual ?

Mr. Windham could not but subscribe to the justice of these observations, but subscribed to them without reformation ; his heart was hacknied in the ways of men, and he could as soon have created himself anew as ceased to cringe, to temporize.

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temporize, pervert and convert, as occasion might require. The Vicar, whose pen, as well as loquacity, was ever at the service of his *own* interest, figured away to infinite advantage, in answer to the attacks made upon his patron, and had no great reason to complain of his success; but the Vicar, notwithstanding his industry in his patron's cause, had given that patron some little offence previous to his leading error, by asking with a small matter of irony, if the *Vicar of Bray* was to continue his humble character now that the farce had had its run? Mr. Windham was not insensible, that there was some openings in the Vicar's transactions for public punishment; but he, at the same time, remembered, that there was such a thing as *reflected* ignominy: it was not to be imagined, that he could have distinguished himself so long and invariably in any cause, without the world's being able to trace contingencies; and if the villainy

villainy had been acceptable, it could never be politic to part too abruptly with the villain; he therefore rested all his schemes upon the family at Mrs. Westly's.

The Vicar *disconcerted*, was too striking an object to escape his wife's observation. She sifted out the reason by negatives; and once mistress of that fort, had no doubt but she should carry every other. What secrets was he not possessed of? what advantages might he not obtain?—but added she, if you can permit these ungrateful returns for all your services to pass unrevenged, you must be capable of any meanness.

Mrs. Arundel, returned the Vicar, with an unfavourable brow, you have already proved yourself a mischievous and busy instrument in my affairs; you are secure whatever fate I may incur; but I now charge you not to advance
one

one step further; to mitigate, not aggravate, is my earnest desire: riches and life may content your wishes, but reputation and friends are far more precious with me.

What, returned the lady, have I then only laboured to be despised? have I increased your possessions, augmented your fame, and fought your battles for no better purpose than to be deserted at the long-run? but take care, Mr. Arundel, friendship dissolved may give birth to some dangerous inclinations: perhaps, we ought to fear each other more than all the rest of the world beside; and be assured, if I am sacrificed, if I am rendered the tool of mediation, your head shall not long be secure from a most formidable storm.

You are an unguarded, and a violent woman, Mrs. Arundel, said the Vicar, and a most unfit companion for the mind
of

of honesty, for the mind of rationality : what labours have you been engaged in on my account ? what work have you accomplished by my solicitation ? your own corrupt, your own high-reaching spirit has hurried you into despicable and punishable actions : you have nothing feminine in your nature ; the tyger is not a more voracious animal ; how would you have destroyed that angel Lady Windham, both in her peace and reputation, if I had not protected her ?

You protect her ! retorted Mrs. Arundel, —a blessed protector will you prove yourself.—Your villainy, I find, is all by implication, and therefore you think yourself secure ; but believe me, you shall not escape your deserved destruction. I am not composed of the gentle, the contemptible materials with your Lady Windhams ;—I neither shrink at bug-bears nor die away at shadows ;—I know

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the world ;—I know Harry Arundel, and now declare war against them both.

You love the French court, Mrs. Arundel, said the Vicar ; you love splendor and magnificence ; will you reside there ?—A man and his wife once declared enemies to each other are best at a distance ; I will never attempt to restrain your inclinations : I will constantly remit you the revenue of a little princefs ; only never name me more ; never look back to what is past, or expect by hostile measures to exculpate yourself or injure me.

I will consider of your proposal, said the lady, nor do I think I shall have any objection to it ; if my person and understanding have lost their weight in your estimation, they may not be altogether so much despised by the rest of your species ;—and I have my foibles ;—so I am but flattered, it is not necessary

to

to my repose that Mr. Arundel should be the flatterer. You don't imagine that, through all its disguise, I have not been able to penetrate your undue approbation of your angel Lady Windham: but wherefore an angel? because she has prudery without the appearance of art, and some few perfections without affectation? if she was once capable of gratifying the odious wishes you entertain, she would lose all her charms with you; it is your own perverseness that constitutes her merit: nor is it improbable upon the same principles, that the wife of Mr. Arundel may have her adorers, though she has lost the power of appearing lovely in her husband's sight. Mrs. Arundel now thought proper to withdraw, and the Vicar, left to himself, confessed in the pangs of conscious iniquity, and of conscious contempt, the beauty, the value, the energy of virtue!

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There was a strange, a mortifying fatality in all his affairs; he was excluded from every possibility of visiting at Lord Windham's, by that wretched Sidney's being in the way, and no less excluded from visiting at his patron's from the same motive; and what was still more intolerable to him, notwithstanding all his powers of persuasion, he was unable to induce Mr. Windham to come to town, and draw his friends from their obscurity; the fellow he introduced as a tool, had contrived to supplant him, and with guilt, confusion, and apprehension, he was almost driven to despair.

This seemed to be the period for retribution; for even Mrs. Davenport began to feel the misery of a wounded conscience, and the distress of approaching dissolution.

On her husband's giving her up, she had privately intrigued with Mr.

Windham, until that gentleman, who was very nice and fickle, dropped off by degrees, and left her to form some new and more permanent connexion. But however transitory every thing in this life, the connexions of the vicious are beyond measure transitory; whilst reason and principle can be kept asleep, all may be well, but the moment that the stupor abates, indignation and contempt rouse up in the soul, and the object, the partner of our iniquity, is of all other objects the most baneful to our sight.

Mrs. Davenport met with a German Count, who took her abroad with him, where she shewed away for some time, but at last, quite weary of that vivacity which had at first so abundantly charmed him, he precipitately deserted her, only making her a slight present. An old peer, who was returning from the Spa, and just on the verge of eternity, engaged her to sing him to repose, and brighten

his waking hours ; with him she arrived in England ; but dissatisfied with her condition, she thought proper to elope, and was most splendidly provided for during several months by a naval commander ; when her health, bloom, and sprightliness, were suddenly lost by the violent attack of a fever. She at length, indeed, recovered, but engaging too early in some gay scenes, had so violent a return of her disorder, that her life was despaired of. In this situation, her lover withdrew himself ; and when, by slow degrees, she became once more capable of enquiring into her affairs, she found herself under great difficulties ; a number of creditors became clamorous, her attendants relaxed their care and kindness, and she having no supporting sources in her own breast, was dreadfully oppressed and dreadfully alarmed : she wrote to her aunt ; a bitter and reproachful letter was all the return she received ; Mr. Windham was applied to with as little

little success; but Lord Windham, who ever found him unpropitious? he remitted her a bank note, and the most tenderly admonishing epistle; got a gentleman, remarkable for his humanity and piety, to visit her, but heard no very favourable accounts of her penitence. She was apprehensive, not contrite, melancholy, not repentant, and had much stronger impressions of the wrath than the mercy of Omnipotence. Lord Windham was at the whole expence of the last two months of her life, and had her buried with great decency; whilst her uncle, aunt, and the gallant that had shared her guilt, the great Mr. Windham, were no less unfeeling for her when alive, than unaffected by her departure.

C H A P. XXVIII.

UNfortunately the new ministry did not display all the spirit in, or tenacity for the honour and welfare of the kingdom as might have been expected: when they should have proceeded to action, they, as at the present period, entered into useless altercation; until the consequences of their neglect falling somewhat heavy, they did at length condescend to open a war with Spain, on the very plan which was rejected and over-ruled, when suggested by the waining patriot; but having pushed their victories in so tolerable a manner, as to ensure themselves, at least, *reflected* honour, they thought proper to prove that they were very ill-qualified for manufacturers of peace. This was an opportunity for Mr. Windham to redeem his lustre; he flew to town, opposed the preliminaries then under consideration,

ration, in terms that ought to have immortalized his eloquence, if his motives would but have born the test; and by the Vicar's help communicated such a sense to the minds of the public, of the folly and insufficiency, the wickedness and corruption of those in power, and his own spirit and perspicuity, that he was once more hung upon as the last hope of a trusting and greatly alarmed people: notwithstanding all which, his zeal, his opposition, were by some means obviated; the peace concluded on its original plan, and France, by the restoration of her fisheries, by the restoration of all her valuable possessions, enabled to resume her former strength, though broke down to the lowest ebb;—a melancholy truth! that England may expect to experience even in the present generation.

Lord Windham expressed his indignation against the measures pursued by

G. 4. admi-

administration; lamented his departed, his vainly sacrificed friend, Colonel Westly, who was formed to bless his country, and to be a blessing to society—with abundant pathos, declared his astonishment that the surviving relations of those numberless brave men, whose deaths were not only unrevenged, but *now* rendered wholly unprofitable, did not beset the throne to plead, to solicit, that the disgrace might be averted from the land, the poignant injury from their souls, of beholding such noble acquisitions so basely given up. Mr. Windham made his own story good; abjured all future connexions with government, and affected to congratulate himself on being at last happily emancipated from the enthusiasm of politics.

Such blunders were committed, and such preposterous schemes carried into execution, that the destruction rather than the prosperity of England appeared to be

be the object of the cabinet's consideration. It was now that that most dangerous and alarming attempt was first begun of marking the prerogative of royalty from the privileges of the constitution. The salutary laws, the long established and unexceptionable customs of England, were by no means invaded ; the hearts of all orders of people were spontaneously verging to one goal ; the *British king* was the *consolidator* of all parties, and the British king needed only a *silken rein*, where affection and loyalty was the universal emulation of his subjects. But however gentle or relaxed the immediate hand of sovereignty, an iron curb was added to gall the necks of the people : prerogative, uncontested and unendangered prerogative, was brandished, as in defiance ; consequently the wish, the intention, the actual duty, became repugnant from the idea of compulsion. So many dreadful instances as historical records contain of thus declaring war

G 5 against

against the minds of the people, compelled Lord Windham to proclaim his astonishment aloud on the occasion : prerogative, he observed, was undoubtedly a royal perquisite, but it ought to be a concealed one ; it was not either wise or safe to expose our most valuable treasure to vulgar or envious eyes. Conscious possession and conscious emolument, were, in that case, the only possible gratification ; for, though operating unseen, it operated in its full vigour ; it was no sooner perceived, than opposition locked up all its properties.

This was not, however, the opinion of the men in power ; they had fatally imbibed the dangerous idea, and no less fatally endeavoured to pass it for currency in a nation of liberty ; but liberty and tyranny are such irreconcileable contradictions, that they found themselves disappointed and foiled in all their darling attempts. The discontent naturally flowing

flowing from this unhappy source became so violent, that actual overtures were at last made to the haughty Mr. Windham, to reassume a share of ministerial dignity: it was all he wanted to fill up the measure of his pride;—the application was made known to all ranks;—his condescension celebrated by all denominations;—for he listened with unwearied goodness to all that could be proposed for general utility; was ready to concur in whatever *he* might plan that wore a face of probability in that cause; but finding that the same influence still prevailed, and that, instead of premier, he must submit to be agent; he left them to make the best of their errors and miscarriages, and, with the most *patriotic* sentiments, again retired to observe the presaged event. Lord Windham, whose soul was as incapable of meanness as villainy, did not, however, upon *this* occasion quite applaud his relation's proceedings, when so much was at stake; a little

honest temporizing would have been noble, and who would affirm that temporizing was difficult to the mind of a courtier? The true friend of his country would never bring private pique or the little punctilioes of ceremony in competition with its preservation, and that motive would sanctify, would support him in every exigence.

The shade of public dissatisfaction returned with redoubled darkness upon the unsteady patriot; and the newspapers teemed with satires and insults: Mr. Windham's influence was alone sufficient in the opinion of the public, if he had exerted his firmness, to have broken all the scandalous chain of ministerial transactions; the peace would never have been patched up, if the patriot had not been lost.

These just reflexions upon his character were by no means soothing to

Mr.

Mr. Windham's vanity ; but he resolved they should not prove any violent interruption to his tranquillity.—Miss Stanley recurred to his imagination, as the surest road to the honours his heart panted after, though he was ashamed to acknowledge it ; as she was next heir to a title, which, with the slightest touch of parliamentary indulgence, could be perpetuated to him and his heirs for ever.

But Lady Windham, the lovely insensible Lady Windham ! should he forego his hopes of succeeding, after all his labours, or fail to bring just punishment upon the Vicar, for not being properly active in his commission of discovering her immediate place of residence after his first beholding her, as his life would then have proved one succession of felicity ? Served in all his dirty, his important purposes, he was now resolved to cast off every uneasy tie ; and the Vicar, from

from having *served* him too zealously, could not but be formidable to his sight. That the Vicar was a villain cannot be denied; a mercenary, a deep designing villain; but he had, nevertheless, been a faithful one, and that faith ought to have sealed his everlasting security: Was it for Mr. Windham, who had swam to the goal by his means and support, to expose, betray, and cast him off?—Surely, no;—he ought to have sheltered even the head of iniquity, since he had thought proper to avail himself of its abilities.

The Vicar, on his part, had too much penetration not to perceive that his meridian was past; but he never apprehended that Mr. Windham would have dared to proceed to extremities with him, so much as they were in each other's power; he therefore determined to overlook trifles, pick the best consolation he could out
of

of his singular situation, and more than once wished himself an honest, that he might have been a happy man.

Mr. Windham abruptly withdrew himself to his newly purchased seat, and left the wretched agent to his own mortifying reflexions.

Thus has the Vicar of Bray's History shewn the early gradations by which public affairs have been brought to their present pitch ; the memory of the *feeling* requires no aid to trace the succeeding evils ; and there are already sufficient pages of literature to produce a casual pang in even the most thoughtless breast.

C H A P. XXIX.

LADY Windham, from the frequency of Mr. Windham's visits, and the lively observations of her sister, began to reproach herself with still greater severity for the part she had acted ; a kind of guilty goblin evermore haunted her imagination : it was in fact, notwithstanding the motive, to have put herself in the power of the man who had at best behaved ridiculously ; yet what would her lord think of so untimely a communication ?—Think, that the innocence of her intentions, and the apprehensions of affection could alone have incited her to practice even a temporary reserve ; and that both that innocence and those apprehensions now determined her to renounce it for ever ;—but if he should unfortunately conceive his cousin's breach of that decorum a woman of honour and understanding ought to maintain, demanded

demanded chaitisement at his hand, where should she hide her miserable head ? or what on earth could compensate so intolerable an evil ? It was, however, impossible, as Mr. Windham's behaviour had been so perfectly unexceptionable upon every other occasion, but his lordship must see it in the same light the Vicar did, and she should only expose herself to his affectionate raillery.

Lord Windham was in his study, where her ladyship immediately joined him, lest, if she allowed her resolution time to cool, she might augment her self-condemnation. The air of perplexity, which, in spite of all her endeavours, was most apparently striking, did not escape his lordship's notice. Your wife, replied she to his kind inquiry into the cause, your wife, for the first time, is afraid she merits your displeasure, yet does she not unbefpeak your utmost severity.

If errors in judgement, returned his lordship, were to meet with arrogant returns from our best friends, the man now before you would be much less happy than he feels and confesses himself to be.—Is there a circumstance of my Sophia's life and infirmity of her nature, that cannot be traced to a valuable, a benevolent source?

Lady Windham related the whole affair, and concluded with saying, that simple as it might be, the Vicar had taught her to tremble for her husband's safety; at the same time that he occasioned her no small confusion from almost convincing her, that there was no foundation for her resentment; but, added she, Mr. Windham ought to have known enough of my sentiments, to have spared me the possibility of misapprehending him, for my retired education could ill qualify me to understand or receive the *adoration* of friendship.

Lord

VICAR OF BRAY. 139

Lord Windham smiled at the beautiful distress, the poignant terrors of delicacy and tenderness ;—be assured, my Sophia, said he, the Vicar did not deceive you in his representation of Mr. Windham's views ; Mr. Windham is a man of the world, and though I have for so many years voluntarily excluded myself, I have not forgot the little innocent gallantries with which it abounds ; but when he supposed me capable of misinterpreting the conduct of the man I love, when he insinuated, that however alive to the nicest sense of honour in the person of my wife, I could be capable of drawing my sword against my friend only for professing that friendship, I must confess, I think he neither paid a compliment to my head or my heart ; but here is Mr. Windham, added he, and he shall, if possible, teach us to account for it.

Mr. Windham no sooner understood the merits of the cause, than he undertook

took to unravel its mysteries. The Vicar, returned he, to whom you conceive yourselves so highly obliged, is perhaps the greatest monster in existence. I see the whole drift of his proceedings ; his designs upon this fair lady were such as the master of darkness could alone be capable of forming, and he sought to acquire a consequence with her by the idea of secrecy, which nothing else could have obtained him. I should have exposed him long ago, but wanted to get the proper clue to his villainy ; if you have any doubt, I think I can suggest a method of taking a very harmless as well as justifiable revenge : let Lady Windham only come to town, and appear tolerably propitious, and you will soon receive the most undeniable proofs. Lord Windham declared his approbation of the proposal, merely on the principle of not condemning the untried criminal.

Mr. Windham was now satisfied that
nothing

nothing remained for him but to become what he would *seem*, or forfeit all pretensions to reputation : having indulged these reflexions some little time, he felt from disappointment what he called honest repugnance ; and convinced that Lady Windham's virtue was invincible, by her late behaviour with respect to his conduct, persuaded himself he ceased to wish it otherwise ; he therefore resolved to declare himself to Miss Stanley in form, and put it out of his own power to recede.

But to return to Lord Windham's family—if Miss Louisa had had a proper acquaintance with Miss Sidney's heart, she would not have supposed her capable of any step that was inconsistent with the strictest rules of decorum ; nothing but the snares that were laid for her could have undone her ; her *soul* was virtuous, and she must have been created anew to be capable of a breach of virtue.

But

But notwithstanding, if Mr. Leneston could have laid empires at her feet, and that the secret of her circumstances could have been for ever concealed, she was superior to every action that must violate her own consciousness: yet that she loved him, she felt the most painful conviction; but her's was *love*—she wished, she desired his felicity though incompatible with her own, and could have rejoiced in his union with the worthy Louisa. Louisa had every thing to recommend her to esteem, friendship, veneration; but her face was not cast, or at least had not been preserved, the most beautifully of any upon earth, and to the youthful imagination, beauty is an inconceivable charm: yet had she her admirers; besides Mr. Davenport, she refused many extreme good offers, but whether any partiality in favour of Mr. Leneston, or an adherence to her earliest resolution were the motives, not even her darling sister could with certainty pronounce.

Miss

Miss Sidney, who had a very pretty taste for painting, drew her own story with such pathos, that there was no beholding it without comprehending it in its fullest meaning, and experiencing the most poignant compassion; but as this was the amusement of her leisure hours, and she was sensible of the execution of her own pencil and warmth of her imagination, she searched each separate production with the greatest diligence.

Thus the very accomplishments which she had once regretted possessing, contributed to soften many a melancholy hour; for she was never if unemployed, but her cheeks were bedewed with tears, and her bosom torn with unutterable anguish. Happy, as she would frequently think, were those who could pass their existence without the keen pang of sensibility, either with respect to their own or their friends misfortune: to feel, she conceived, was to be wretched; but who does

does not feel the corporeal or mental evil? not the veriest clod that ever nature produced: and the mind of sensibility has this consolation, that it is amply compensated by its pleasures for its pains, and that it is no less unreasonable than impossible to separate the inconvenience from the convenience in any situation, or upon any occasion; therefore we ought not to complain, when the balance is pretty equal.

Mr. Windham made his first overtures respecting Miss Stanley to her relations, who were so wise and so prudent to be captivated with them: his visits were admitted, the tears of the lady gradually wiped away, and a wedding huddled up with all expedition, which neither of the parties chose should immediately transpire.

But little did Miss Stanley know to whom she had united herself; the ambitious

ambitious man and the coxcomb are individuals that nature has disqualified for being an honour to the marriage state. Yet is marriage, that most consequential of all our steps, taken not only precipitately, but by way of contradiction, frolick, nay revenge : for if a lady has a father that refuses her the spark she loves, for whatever good or substantial reasons, she is offended, pouts, or at least, perhaps, approaches the altar of God with spleen and rancour of heart, and bestows herself even at the price of perjury to the man she hates. If impropriety could justify impropriety, or the error of our neighbours extenuate ours, I grant you that few would be judged with severity ; but we shall one day find this a miserable criterion—yet this is the busines of a divine rather than an historian ; I will not therefore trespass against all rule, and preach to be despised.

How did this lady degenerate in her taste! her first lover was brave, generous, noble, and beneficent ; he loved her better than he did his own life ; nay, loved his country doubly for her sake : for whatever the profession, he would frequently argue, we either ought to fill it with pleasure and principle, or we ought to abandon it. A lukewarm soldier was like an indolent trader, despicable ; nor would he have had the confidence to claim her hand, if his life had been a reproach to his profession.

The man she accepted was of a very different genius ; cowardly, illiberal, ignoble, and avaricious : his manners were ever disguised, his countenance masked, and his expressions equivocal or deceitful : the bow, the shrug, the unmeaning promise, and the oblivion of the memory was his in the greatest perfection. Her person, indeed, pleased him, but after

after the first month what is person to the man of gallantry?—Lady Windham had been the goddess of his divinity for many years, but Lady Windham was unattainable, and that was the security of his attachment. He could look back without compunction, and forward without a single resolution of reformation; except, indeed, in the case of Mrs. Portmore, when a pang of regret would seize his bosom for her escaping his toils, or that if he could but have subdued Lady Windham, there would be nothing more worth accomplishing; consequently, he should become a peaceful member of society. With all this vice in his nature, and so much as was actually brought into practice, it was astonishing that Lord Windham, notwithstanding all his simplicity and goodness, never once suspected him to be a villain; but he had so

H . much

much art, and could so abundantly glos over any action, that it required the actual optics of knavery to discover that he was a knave.



C H A P. XXX.

POOR Mr. Leneston was exceedingly unhappy from Miss Sidney's confession; but though he apprehended one moment that it must have a considerable meaning, the next he would flatter himself that he was merely deceived.—Louisa, disposed as she was to render him every kind office, did not suffer all his importunity to prevail upon her to give him even her idea of Miss Sidney's real circumstances: her notions of delicacy were such, that if a man, she would not have married the widow of another; but if her friends' sentiments were less refined, she could rejoice in their happiness; nor could she answer it to herself to be deficient in her endeavours to promote it!

But she found little encouragement for the prosecution of her friendly

H 3 purpose;

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purpose; every one had an opinion of Miss Sidney that was totally incompatible with imposing herself upon a worthy young fellow in a false character; and as to Mr. Leneston's being disposed to make choice of her in her true one, no one of them had the remotest idea. Miss Louisa had, nevertheless, observed the young gentleman with very uncommon attention; and having heard of most preposterous absurdities which lovers had committed, and convinced that few could love with a greater degree of fervency, she would not have been willing to answer for the consequence. Besides, she had still a farther reason, she was most inexpressibly attached to both, and gave them credit for a delicacy and a refinement that she wanted to bring to the test; but above all things, she dreaded being suspected of that little malignancy called jealousy; for to have been supposed capable of attaching herself to a young fellow whose affections were apparently

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apparently given to another, or that any sentiment could have prompted her to prove an impediment to the happiness of her friends, would have hurt her beyond measure: for these reasons she was determined every thing should be their own act and deed, and left such an opening for the exertion of their election and principles, as could not fail to shew them in a just point of view.

Lord and Lady Windham, as was agreed, once more revisited Mrs. Arundel, who appeared doubly solicitous to recommend herself to her husband's friends. By the direction of her much honoured lord, Lady Windham relaxed as much as possible her natural reserve, in order to draw out the Vicar; for his lordship having been long accustomed to approve him, and incapable of all injustice, was resolved to detect him for a villain, or re-establish him in his friendship.

H 4.

Lady

Lady Windham was so ill a dissembler, that they almost doubted of success; but such is the folly, the vanity of love, that its optics can magnify the slightest encouragement into actual invitation; the Vicar's uncommon discernment was here of little use; what he had so long wished, he very soon believed, and depending upon the weakness, the levity of the female heart, fancied nothing more was wanting than a gracious opportunity to fulfill his utmost schemes. Her ladyship was, however, so little calculated for deceit, as to be able to advance any lengths, that she soon begged some other plan might be struck out; for that the constraint, the difficulty of her task was beyond what she was able to sustain. Mr. Windham was neither surprised nor mortified at her ladyship's retreat: things had been brought to such a crisis by the sanction her small toleration had given them, that he undertook to accomplish the rest himself, and contrived

contrived to make an appointment in her ladyship's name beyond the Vicar's best hopes, beyond his most flattering expectations. A masquerade ball was then in agitation, and a loose Turkish dress a sufficient disguise for either sex; the grave, the venerable patriot, did not scruple in such a cause as the detection of a villain, to sink his character in a less dignified one that answered his purpose; and having placed Lord Windham in a convenient situation for overhearing all that passed between him and the Vicar, prepared, in a salon miserably lighted and the convenience of a mask, to receive the right reverend gallant. The Vicar was punctual in his appointment, and being conducted by his friend Mr. Martin to the lady, would have made her a very fine speech, if she had not insisted upon being first heard on an important subject.

Mr. Arundel, said the supposed lady, in feigned accents, to what am I to

H 5 impute

impute your extraordinary conduct ? when my mother was ready to bestow me upon you, you thought proper to marry another ; yet you would now persuade me, that your affection for me is so violent, that to abuse the confidence of a man who for years considered you as his guardian and his friend, is the only way to give you peace.

When I first addressed you, my dearest madam, returned the Vicar, your extreme youth gave me little chance for success ; Lord Windham was also so much attached to you, that to have proved an interruption to your union would have been the height of barbarity ; but in the very instant that I beheld you given up to him, though in appearance for ever, I cheered my soul with the fond expectation of some future favourable period : you have seen, madam, how religiously I have preserved the secret with which you honoured me ; nor have I suffered
my

my indignation against the man who dared to affront you to break forth, because I would not wound either your reputation or your peace.

Affronted ! returned the supposed lady, you insisted upon it, that there was no affront intended me, and by terrifying me with apprehensions for the life I loved, prevailed upon me to conceal my ideas of it from my lord.

Dear madam, can this be the purpose for which I obtained the happiness of an appointment ? was it my voice that constituted good or evil in your imagination ? we are seldom pained without a cause ; and if your lord was now to be informed of that affair, I believe you would not find his approbation on the side of your credulity.

And is this the language of love, sir ?

H. 6

I will

I will deal openly with you, madam; I am not to be trifled with ; your own invitation has brought me here, and if you don't know your own mind, that is no reason I should not be properly resolved, and —

Thou most infernal of hypocrites ! cried Mr. Windham, in a voice that broke upon his ear like a clap of thunder, thou most consummate of villains ! My lord, you now see (for Lord Windham was advancing) to what account you are to place your obligations to this gentleman. You have now been taught by his own confession, no less than I myself, what dupes, what wretched dupes we have been to the most corrupt of human natures. Why really, sir, said Lord Windham, I must acknowledge, nothing but the evidence of my own senses could have given me an adequate impression of Mr. Arundel's deservings ; but is it not surprising, that so fine a genius should

be

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be so little successful? what return can I possibly make him for the favours he intended me? I am ignorant what cognizance the law would take of his proceedings; nor do I find myself disposed to enquire; he has given me a right to do myself justice, and as my injuries are singular, so shall my revenge be full of singularity.

Suffer me, gentlemen, said the trembling culprit, to leave your sight for ever; to you, Mr. Windham, I most particularly apply, because to you I have been a valuable friend.

Sir, returned Mr. Windham, be uniformly base; publish whatever part of my affairs are according to your conception stamped with the seal of confidence; what shall I have now to fear? you can be out in your politics; you can err in your judgement; and as for your veracity, you have kindly demonstrated how much that

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that is to be relied upon: you see, my lord, how necessary it is to guard against such a harpy; your testimony I doubt not but I may command; and I am afraid Lord Windham's testimony will be able to invalidate the honest Vicar's on any occasion.

Is there no terms of accommodation, that can be granted me? demanded the Vicar, in the most abject accents.

Yes, replied Mr. Windham, fly the country; enrich some of your deserving relations with the spoils of your iniquity; and from this hour lead a life of unremitting contrition; but if beyond this hour you continue in this metropolis, or if beyond a necessary time you are found in this kingdom, be assured you shall be given up to public justice and public ignominy. You have a nephew (meaning me the writer of this faithful history) who has experienced your pride, avarice, and

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and barbarity ; but for Lord Windham, he had perished years ago ; the vicarage of Bray shall be his ; and thus will both the church and society be delivered from their greatest disgrace, their greatest bane.

Your wife ——

I will never see her more, returned he.

But Mr. Arundel, said his lordship, have you forgot your son ? in what extremities did I find him ! you will not refuse him a share in your fortune : you now know your sentence, and therefore no parlying ; we will nevertheless, if you please sir, to Mr. Windham, abject and abhorred as he is, leave him to a few moments recollection.

Mr. Windham beyond measure congratulated himself upon the dexterous management of so critical a point ; and finding on enquiry, that the Vicar had

literally followed his injunctions, his next care was to remove Mrs. Arundel.

Mrs. Arundel was, in some degree, prepared for his visits by flying reports, and had wrote to her cousin Martin, intreating him to accompany her into France, and devote his future life to her alone ; adding conditions not a little flattering to the generality of imaginations : but Mr. Martin had better prospects ; and therefore made no other use of this generous proposal than exposing it to Mr. Windham.

Mr. Windham, thus armed, entered Mrs. Arundel's apartment ; and having communicated her husband's disgrace, advised her to remove herself from universal contempt, if not from universal inconvenience.

The fury for once displayed herself in her true colours ; disappointment, rage, turbulence

turbulence and guilt, were all conspicuous in her gorgon aspect ; she insulted, she menaced, she invoked the most dire vengeance on his head ; despised his attention ; declared she woud haunt him as his evil genius ; when, in the midst of her heroics, Mr. Windham calmly presenting her love epistle to her sight, she burst into tears ; and, as soon as relieved into recollection, offered to submit herself to his disposition. In the course of their conversation, Mr. Windham, with pleasure, discovered that it was her desire to retire to France ; to France he instantly persuaded her to repair, where she now passes her days but very uncomfortably ; as from her reduced circumstances she is unable to purchase respect or admiration, or indulge herself in the vanities she loved.

C H A P. XXXI.

THE innocent family shuddered at the very idea of such perfidy and wickedness, as they were now convinced had been practiced by people they had once held in the highest esteem ; nor did Mrs. Wentworth conceive she could ever be sufficiently thankful that her lovely child had not fallen a victim to Mr. Arundel's deep-laid villainy.

Louisa now undertook the cause of Leneston and Miss Sidney ; opened it in the kindest, the most delicate terms to their respectable friends, and lamented that the poor, the worthy girl had known irretrievable misfortunes.

Lord Windham was greatly surprised, and said he should not suppose that Leneston would chuse to unite himself to her, if he was acquainted with the nature of her

her circumstances ; subscribed perfectly to her abundant merits ; wished it was possible by any means to render her happy, but professed he had too good an opinion of her mind to believe that was the method.

Suppose we call them, said Mrs. Wentworth, and mention it before them. My lord took upon him to introduce the subject ; hinted both tenderly and politely that he had observed a growing approbation between them, and that all their friends were ready to assist in completing their wishes. Mr. Leneston expressed his gratitude in terms that sufficiently evinced his feelings, but Miss Sidney answered only with tears. My dear child, said Lord Windham, I did not mean to wound you, nor would I render the conversation distressing : Leneston is a generous young fellow ; and the innocence of your intentions from your present amiable conduct must be apparent. I know the particulars of your story ;

ftory ; you were both some time ago dependant on the bounty of others, but the Vicar has by compulsion performed an act of justice, and his son Leneston is now entitled to many thousand pounds.

Mr. Leneston Mr. Arundel's son ! repeated Miss Sidney wildly. Yes, madam, said my lord, as certain as you are the daughter of my much lamented tutor. And you know the particulars of my story ? returned she—Alas ! is it possible that you should know I was the Vicar's wife ?

An universal astonishment was the consequence of this declaration ; but when the miserable girl could so far collect herself as to give the gradations of her seduction, horror and indignation, pity and esteem were the alternate passions of their bosoms.

Young Leneston declared that he had been always of opinion, that vice, nay, indiscretion

indiscretion were wholly incompatible with Miss Sidney's amiable nature ; and that though she would stand before him self-accused, he had flattered himself that the explanation would have been happy for both.

Lord Windham, Mrs. Westly, and Mrs. Wentworth, made many moral and sensible observations upon the vicissitudes of human affairs, and his lordship thinking this a fit time, put the grateful, the deserving Miss Sidney in possession of her annuity.

How came it, my lord, said Mrs. Wentworth, that open as you have been upon every other occasion, you should have so long concealed this circumstance of Mr. Leneston's relationship to the Vicar from our knowledge ?

For many reasons, my dear madam, returned he ; in the first place, I should hope

hope you will do me the justice to believe, that I am not over forward to boast of my own good offices. I found that worthy young gentleman in such a situation as I trust he has intirely lost the remembrance of, deserted by both father and mother, and destitute of every necessary; was it not natural to become the protector of the helpless and the innocent? I had him placed at school; found peculiar pleasure in his growing attachment to me, but could never prevail upon the Vicar to see him; and to excuse his neglect and inhumanity, he affected to think the child did not belong to him; this was what induced me never to let them meet. In the second place, —but why should I enlarge upon a subject that needs no explanation?

What a wretch, said Mrs. Westly, must that man be, who could forsake his own offspring! but it must be confessed the Vicar's character is a uniform one.

Pray,

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Pray, is he not liable to a prosecution on
Miss Sidney's account?

You know, madam, said Lord Windham, he is now far enough out of the kingdom; had I been acquainted with his base proceedings in time, he most certainly should have made atonement.

Mr. Leneston begged that he might divide what he had obtained with the injured girl, but Lord Windham would not hear it. Miss Sidney, said he, is under my care.

Mrs. Westly then begged leave to communicate her wishes; Louisa and Leneston, said she, are the children of my heart; with what inexpressible pleasure should I know them united! Louisa professed the highest friendship for the young gentleman, but intreated such a thing might never be mentioned more: had I been his first choice, said she, I verily

verily believe I should have adhered to my resolutions of celibacy, but nothing could prevail upon me to accept a once subdued heart. There was so much good sense and such an appearance of firmness in her determination, that the parties consented to drop all thoughts of their union.

Ignorant as Lord Windham was of the measures of seduction pursued by the Vicar, with respect to Leneston's mother, he had always avoided the mention of her, nay, indeed, had almost forgot that ever he had known her. The family, however, with whom she went abroad, returning to England much about the time of the Vicar's disgrace, and all the mother alive in her heart, she could not forbear enquiring the fate of her beloved child; nay, intreating his lordship to grant her one half hour's audience. Lord Windham, whose ear was ever open to the voice of distress, and

and who, from being a man, could not persuade himself he was intitled to judge the errors, or the renounced vices of humanity with severity, most chearfully complied with her request, nevertheless hoping that the good sense and constancy she had evinced, in chusing him the protector of the Vicar's son, and for so many years foregoing all claim to him, would secure her from every desire of beholding the living testimony of her guilt, the living testimony of her condemnation.

From this motive, he determined to keep her application a secret, and having given orders for the manner of her reception, and settled the etiquette of his own behaviour, he expected her arrival in his study.

Mrs. Dawson, for so she called herself, was immediately conducted to his lordship; Lord Windham, said she, as she

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entered, will add one more obligation to that I now experience. I have been a sufferer for many, many years, and shall I not at last taste some small consolation? Had the Vicar's fortune been undisposed of, I had still preserved the secret of his enormous guilt; but since I cannot prejudice my child by exculpating my own conduct, I can no longer constrain myself. Your lordship will well understand the wishes of nature; to abhor the guilty, we need not hate the innocent. Oh! could I but behold him undespised by his friends, then would all my calamities be amply compensated. Do not, my lord, prejudge me; read this paper, and receive Mr. Windham's relation; on that alone I hinge my claim to indulgence; should you discover that instead of a weak, seduced, or a vicious wretch, I am a barbarously injured one; that in the first instance, brutality was my destruction and in the second filial tenderness my only crime; if what will justify

justify me in the sight of Heaven can remove natural prejudices from your heart, you have my address, and the means of making me happy.

Having said thus much, and learnt that her child was well and in easy circumstances, she hastily withdrew, and left his lordship to the aggravated condemnation of the villain he had once esteemed and honoured. The whole tenor of Mrs. Dawson's conduct had been such, that Lord Windham could not doubt her veracity, and unwilling to enter upon so horrid a subject with his friend, he resolved to take Mrs. Wentworth and Mrs. Westly's opinion, what ought to be done for the mother of their favourite youth. The good ladies, whose benevolence was never exceeded on any occasion, were for receiving her with abundant marks of kindness, and Mrs. Westly proposed taking her particularly under her pro-

I 2 tection,

tection, as since her beloved lost child had so great an interest in the son, he would not have suffered the mother to be neglected. To prevent the impertinent observation of their domestics, and guard against the ill-natured curiosity of a busy world, it was however determined, that she should be introduced by the name of Leneston, and considered as a widow. Miss Louisa was commissioned to prepare the Cornet for the tender interview, whose heart exulted in the blessing, and he was impatient for the maternal embrace: it was too much for description.—She pressed, fondly pressed him in her affectionate arms; and he with the most amiable assiduity wiped the succeeding tears from the cheek: We will know no distinction of circumstances, cried he; what I can call mine must be yours, or you forego your claim in me: can I have a happier task than clearing the bosom that has felt such abundant cares upon my account?

or

or is it possible for me to enjoy affluence if you have one difficulty unremoved?— My friends will be your friends, and to the end of my existence, duty and love shall be the distinguishing characteristics of your poor Leneston. To be acquainted with Mrs. Leneston, ~~was~~ to esteem her; adversity and travail had taught her so just a way of thinking, that she was at once a pleasing and instructive companion.

During her absence from her native country, she had, as was very natural, numberless advantageous offers for changing her condition; but as her resolutions to observe one undeviating track of propriety were not lightly formed, so they were not to be lightly foregone; she therefore returned, as before mentioned, with the family with which she had embarked; by whom, in consideration of her abundant merit, she had for years been treated as a friend instead

of a servant. One gentleman, however, in particular, a native of Jamaica, born to command, and unknowing of disappointment, because he took it in his head to make choice of her for a wife, took it in his head to be violently offended at her refusal of him. In vain did the poor creature use every objection, modesty and humble independence could suggest ; — she was not to be allowed an election, in the same moment that he himself *insisted* upon that indulgence ; and from having a *soul made of fire*, he became indefatigable in little plots, either to surprise her into compliance, or revenge her obstinate rejection of him. Mrs. Leneston was much alarmed by his behaviour, but the gentleman under whose protection she was situated exhorted her to believe herself secure—the greatest bravadoes, he would add, were always the greatest cowards ; and whatever big words Mr. Nevel might deal in, he was confident his actions would be per-

perfectly harmless. But Mr. Ingram was not aware that low cunning is too often an over-match for ingenuousness; nor, incapable as he himself was of fraud and outrage, had he the remotest idea that a man would *dare* so far, as to beset his house at midnight, and carry off a respectable member of his family in spite of all his endeavours to defend her—so nevertheless it proved—the negroes, by this knight-errant's contrivance, were all laid fast asleep, in consequence of an unaccustomed supply of brandy and wines, which he found means to convey amongst them; nor did he fail to have Mr. Ingram's arms either purposely unloaded, or removed to a different chamber to the one in which they were wont to be deposited—when therefore he was awaked by the unavoidable bustle, compulsion on the one part, and resistance on the other occasioned, he found himself under the mortifying necessity of becoming a tame spectator of the villainous transaction, and Mrs. Le-

neston was at length borne off in triumph: Having rode furiously for three or four hours, they arrived at one of Nevel's houses, where Mrs. Leneston was put under the care of an elderly negroe woman till farther orders;—and as Nevel was not a little fatigued, as well as his companions, with the expedition, it was settled that they should leave her unmolested till the morning—when it was resolved she should accept Nevel's honorable offers with a proper grace, or be rendered the general prize of the good company. Mrs. Leneston, though it was impossible for her to apprehend the schemes that were forming against her, was sufficiently miserable—she passed the night in tears; and it was apparent the poor negroe was not a little interested on her part, for difference of complexion, whatever advantage we may be disposed to make of it, by no means constitutes difference of nature.

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The moment the desperadoes were assembled the prisoner was called for, who no sooner appeared before them, than she was severely reprimanded for spoiling her face with blubbering—a mighty grievance truly! said one of them, to be brought here only to be made the richest woman in the island!—Mrs. Leneston plead the humility of her wishes—a plea that was ridiculed by the whole party; and the question, after abundant pros and cons, was solemnly put, Whether she would or would not receive Mr. Nevel for her husband?—It was however exceedingly absurd to require a determination where no negative was to be admitted: when she attempted to speak she was silenced by assurances that no refusal would be tolerated; and having provoked them by her delays, the avowal of their intentions respecting her broke upon her like a clap of thunder, and she could only tremblingly solicit a short respite, in order to collect herself, before

she pronounced her final resolution. Debates ran high—the request she made, whilst it was deemed reasonable on the one side, was exploded by the other ; but happily for her there was in the end a majority in her favour, and four-and-twenty hours graciously granted her to spend in unavailing anguish.

On her return to the negroe's apartment, she thought she perceived some no less important than propitious intelligence in her countenance—they nevertheless looked upon one another for some time, without venturing to exchange a syllable—when the negroe in a low voice said, Can you ride horse, can you make poor negroe free, poor negroe no stay behind—this was enough ; Mrs. Leneston very justly believed she had sufficient interest with Mr. Ingram to obtain rewards for her deliverer ; and therefore did not scruple to engage in his name to fulfill all her demands. The dead hour
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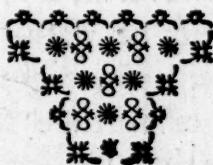
of night was fixed upon for their departure; a horse of uncommon speed, taken from the stable for their conveyance; in which double robbery she conceived herself justified by the laws of nature and the laws of morality—for it was merely an act of self-defence.

The moon shone kindly upon them—the road, though intricate, was well known to the negroe; and they had the good fortune to reach their asylum without either interruption or molestation. Mr. and Mrs. Ingram, together with their children and domestics, were beyond measure delighted to find Lenelton once more under their roof; and would have sued for legal compensation, but that they were fearful of disagreeable consequences:—it was then determined that they should appear ignorant of her escape, until they had an opportunity of embarking for England, which they had long intended to do, as soon as they

I. 6 could

could settle their affairs in such a manner, as to secure them from the necessity of ever visiting the island again. Having christened the negroe and recompenced her in a degree no less superior to her utmost expectations, than Mrs. Leneston's utmost promises, they gave her her choice either to attend them to England, or to be conveyed to any distant island belonging to her own people—the latter of which proving her inclination, she was at a future period put on board a ship bound for the place from whence she had been violently removed, for the purpose of being sold to the best bidder, and where they had afterwards the satisfaction to hear she was very comfortably settled. Nevel, from the instant he discovered their flight, was now frantic with rage, and now sinking with self-apprehensions—though he had the hardness to commit crimes, he was one of those who had not the courage to bear even the idea of punishment; and from being

being well apprised of the character he had to deal with, he very naturally concluded that he should be called to a severe account for his conduct. Wherever he went, or wherever situated, his cowardice was still the bane of his peace ; and having recourse to the bottle for relief, he soon brought on a fever, which, in those hot climates, is generally fatal, that in a few days, by finishing his existence, restored Mrs. Leneston to liberty and tranquillity.



C H A P. XXXII.

BY degrees the horror of the Vicar's guilt wore off the minds of this worthy circle; nor did the pleasure they took in each other's company and conversation receive inconsiderable addition, by Mr. and Mrs. Ingram's being enrolled on the list of friendship. Mr. Ingram was the youngest son of a clergyman, who having given him a liberal education, was compelled by his circumstances to push him into life, without any other support or dependance. He became however in a very few years a living testimony of the utility of education, and the advantages of integrity —his increase of fortune seemed not so much the effect of his industry, as the natural consequence of his merit; and as he had great property from his connexions in Jamaica, he had judged it necessary to pay a visit to that island,

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in order to put it in such a train as to derive all due benefits from it, devoid of all inconvenience. In this expedition he had been accompanied by his wife, a lady of very uncommon accomplishments, and three daughters, the eldest of which, from being far from unlike the fair Sidney, in either person or mental endowments, in the course of acquaintance insensibly stole upon Mr. Leneston's approbation. Mrs. Westley, and in short all his friends were highly pleased by the incident; and the generous Louisa more especially interested herself in promoting an union that she conceived would be productive of the most salutary effects.—She indeed entered into the affair with the most agreeable warmth, removed every objection that prudence or wisdom could suggest, and in the end was so successful as to find she had not laboured in vain. You and I, my Sidney, she would say, whilst we devote our days to each other, will not be

be so illiberal as to prove neglectful of our friends happiness—nothing can so effectually restore the tranquillity of our Leneston's mind, as being united to a woman of merit—had you been fortunate, or I handsome—I will not say that I should have espoused Miss Ingram's cause! but situated as we are, for good and wise reasons I make no doubt, let us assist what appears to be the intentions of Providence, and augment the felicity of the already peculiarly favoured. It is with astonishment, said Miss Sidney, that I observe the operations of your self-denying, your generous spirit—a mind like yours, though not lodged in the fairest form, cannot but have strong attractions for sensibility; and was I a man you would be the first choice of my heart—to what purpose is a face beautiful, if the soul is deformed; or can you have an idea of the misery of that fire-side, that beauty alone is expected to brighten?—It is not the blooming cheek or

or the sparkling eye that can give permanent delight ; unless the one derives its glow from mental dignity, the other its lustre from mental sanctity ; for with respect to the world's opinion, except where our own hearts join their corroborating voice, it is of little importance whether we are extolled or condemned ; for all that is truly valuable, or truly meritorious, lies far beyond the reach of common inspection.

Mr. Ingram was so well pleased with young Leneston, that, notwithstanding the wish had been early formed of an alliance with him, by the Windham family, the actual overture was his.—I think, said he, if I have any judgement, there is a growing approbation between my daughter and your favourite ; and if that is the case let us relieve them from every anxiety by declaring our sentiments. In point of fortune, as Mrs. Westley has settled it, he is my daughter's

ter's equal; and in merit I do not scruple to pronounce him greatly her superior—but such as she is, if he has a wish to obtain her, I should think myself happy in bestowing her hand upon him.

Miss Ingram, though no conduct was ever more unexceptionable than hers, was much hurt to find that her tender sentiments had transpired—I own, said she blushing, and covered with confusion, I have a great esteem for Mr. Leneston, and am intirely at my father's disposal; but how it could be suspected that I had formed a choice without his direction, without his command, I am no less astonished than mortified.

Miss Wentworth raillied her with so much good-natured vivacity, that she began by degrees to recover her own good opinion, and to assume becoming confidence. Mr. Leneston, from his connexion,

connexions, had numberless opportunities of advancing his fortune at court; but it is so natural for us to adopt the notions of those we are attached to, that he had an equal aversion to the life of splendid servitude that Lord Windham had from his infancy entertained. All lucrative employments, Lord Windham used frequently to say, ought to be possessed by men of undeniable abilities, but if possible by men whose abilities were their only fortunes. Where large possessions were given, there were sufficient duties to be performed by the individual, without letting himself out to mercenary *undertakings*. To his prince he owed all that a subject could accomplish, and it was incumbent upon him to protect those that were in a state of subordination; but that the services of the noble-minded ought to be spontaneous—that hankering after the loaves and fishes, that eagerness for fee and reward was what destroyed all the firm principles of government;

ment; and honest men's countenancing the practice, indemnified the thieves of society.—This was nevertheless a doctrine that was but ill-received by the generality of the public; for the rich blockhead, on the single merit of his riches, not only frequently pushed for, but frequently obtained the first trusts, and in consequence of those trusts procured all that homage and veneration, which ought alone to await intrinsic worth, and evinced greatness. But besides Mr. Leneston's own proper qualifications, he was rendered additionally eligible to those in power from his intimacy with the Windhams: there were many knots both in the ministers and the agents conduct that had never been satisfactorily untied; and Mr. Windham's successors would gladly have picked out somewhat from his character to have enhanced their own.—Leneston was not however to be made a cats-paw of; he abjured the little artifices, and despised

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the finesse of politics; and would not have sold that freedom of thought, that freedom of action, which is the peculiar birthright of every Briton that dares to claim it, for all the golden chains in the universe. Administration had the wisdom to discover that their credit was greatly diminished, though they had not had the wisdom to guard against the evil's taking place:—whilst an appearance of right is kept up in public affairs, though realities may happen to be wrong, no bad consequence can ensue—but *faith* is full as necessary in the state as the church; the delusion should be evermore preserved, for once undeceived, what hold can we hope to gain on the opinion of mankind? When we are spectators at a pantomime, we are entertained—when behind the curtain our entertainment ceases; but I shall perhaps be told, that I have exchanged narrative for reflexion, and reminded that the age in which I have the honour to live or write

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(which according to the Shandean definition I own to be exactly the same thing) is too wise to be taught, and too incorrigible for an obscure pen to amend.

—I feel the force of the rebuke, and therefore leaving the world to its own inventions, I shall endeavour to re-establish myself in the reader's favour in the ensuing chapter.



CHAP.

C H A P. XXXIII.

EVERY thing being settled to the satisfaction of all parties, I the writer of this history received an invitation to attend my friends and relations on the day of Leneston's nuptials; nor do I know that I ever passed a more agreeable one in my whole life —though I must confess, I was in a small degree unhinged by a message from Mr. Windham whilst at dinner, requesting my company early the next morning. As in the circle of friendship there can be no secrets, my communication of his billet produced much speculation: some were of opinion, that he meant to draw me into the political track, and professed themselves anxious for the consequence; whilst others conceived that thereby hung a tale, that would be productive of great advantage to me.—As for my own part, my curiosity was not so busy as to interrupt my repose; for it is in the

power only of those we greatly esteem to occasion us any violent agitations. When arrived at his house I was not long without a presentiment of the business—let me whisper it however—can the *great* descend to such *little* shifts!—he wanted the assistance of my pen to clear up a measure or two which had been totally misconceived by the public—I assume not the smallest merit to myself when declaring that I declined the proposal with much *hauteur*—for it would have been to forfeit the good opinion, the friendship, and the protection of Lord Windham, to have closed with it. He was then mean enough to insinuate, that the services of conversation would be far from unacceptable.—I could scarce restrain from the exclamation “ how are the mighty fallen!” but bowing very low, for I was taking my leave, I left him no reason to hope that I would prostitute my sentiments in the minutest article for his sake. I retired, and was

called back upon the most frivolous pretences many times before I found it possible to escape ; for, from having proved the frailty of various people's compositions, he could not easily forego his attempts to win me to his purpose. I did nevertheless at last escape, and not a little congratulated myself when I perceived the great door shutting after me ; and with as much expedition, as if I had had reason to distrust my own firmness, repaired to Lord Windham's, as to a certain asylum from all possible impropriety.

Yet however disinclined, from their aversion to politics, my good friends were to my engaging in that walk of business, and whatever approbation my conduct met with, I could see that Lord Windham was far from entertaining a just opinion of his relation—it was a maxim with him that no character was perfect—consequently he did not take

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any extraordinary alarm at little imperfections ; and after all that was said upon the subject, it was plain that he was much more prompt to lament the ill-treatment he had received in his ministerial capacity, than to suspect him of one unwarrantable action ; and as I was not at all disposed to combat the prejudices of goodness, where no immediate purpose was to be answered, whatever were my private sentiments, I left his Lordship to the full enjoyment of his.

Those that never had any thing to do with courts or courtiers, can have only a very inadequate idea, notwithstanding all the literary pictures of the chicanery that is hourly practiced there. A question of importance was to be agitated—a borough became vacant—I was applied to to offer a friend of mine as a candidate, and assured that he should want neither qualification nor support—this also

also was rejected by me, but a few days afterwards a *thing* equally insignificant, and equally exceptionable, was set up ; the borough carried, and the members of a certain illustrious club hailed brother, by the most despicable of God's creatures. The Middlesex election now became the object of attention—the eyes, no less of the sensible part of our own country, than foreigners, were fixed on that one point, as the point on which all our constitutional rights depended-- need I mention the figure we made upon the occasion ? the rights of the constitution received a mortal stab, and though many of the most judicious amongst them, whose party principles were known to be immediately opposite to the principles of popularity, exerted themselves to save us from the reproach, the reproach was incurred, nor can the most glorious measures of the most glorious administration, if such should ever again bless this land, avert the misfortunes

it will form an opening for to the latest postéritéy.

Lord Windham with difficulty constrained himself from taking an active part in the great cause of his country—he affirmed that it was the period for all honest men to unite, and force their way to their f---n's heart, by rendering him the most essential of services--the preserving his honour--but he was withheld from this measure by the apprehension of wounding, where he wished to heal--he perceived the over-ruling influence too strong to fear the shock of opposition; and he well knew that desperation was not to be trusted--for when once the mine was sprung, there was no setting bounds to its devaftation--and he thought it was much safer to leave the work in the hands of time, to mature by slow degrees, than, by precipitating it, pull down those ruins that could never be too long kept from reaching the miserable

heads over which they so formidably hung. Right sorry I am to be under a necessity of observing, that of all ministerial tools, when even great abilities and great vices do not meet in the same person, none is so truly valuable, because none can be so extensively useful, as the clerical character. It was therefore undoubtedly for this reason, and for this only, that so much pains was taken to engage me---it is nevertheless a shocking reflexion that those who enlist themselves in the spiritual service of their country, should be capable of maintaining so base a part in the temporal. But what I chose to lose Mr. Martin chose to gain; for so far had he profited by the good examples that were before him, that he rendered himself at once a dexterous, and a deep politician; nay, if I am not misinformed, he has reduced politicks to a system, and can as readily point out when to unite and when to separate---when to promote and when to oppose---when to

be honest and when to be a knave, as any one proficient ever yet could boast---would it not therefore be of utility to the rising generation to be placed under his tuition---but I refer this point to the determination of the learned.

As to the opinions in repute with our ancestors, they are now totally exploded ---to love ourselves, not to love our country, is now the universal creed; it cannot then be wonderful that he who the most strictly adheres to it is the most successful.---It was suspected, but never actually proved, that Mr. Martin played a kind of court game in American affairs—in other words that he received fees on each side the water. In imitation of the Vicar, he affected to be very eloquent upon the merits of taxation, though it was undeniably that he had little or no acquaintance with any of our constitutional laws; but like the parrot retailed the lesson that had been taught

taught him. It may however justly be said of that measure, that let who would be the suggestor, or defender of it, it was a most unfortunate measure for Great-Britain, as well as a most unjust one with respect to the colonies. The laws of England were the laws of America; the established, the acknowledged, the sacred rule of all their actions—but the laws of taxation were widely different—taxation and representation could not be separate, therefore what could make the laws of taxation binding, where no representation had been heard of? The minion Mr. Martin nevertheless would attempt to prove the contrary, all unassisted as he was by either the advantages of education, or the advantages of native elocution---and he succeeded accordingly. He took for his wife, in order the better to strengthen his noble connexions, the cast mistress of one of his patrons, who deigned to smile graciously upon him wheresoever his eye encountered

countered him; a distinction that not a little contributed to the advancement of his importance with the vulgar. Thus it must be obvious what wheels within wheels the great machine is composed of, and by what contemptible methods they are frequently put in motion---nevertheless, it is a contention for freedom that throws us into such repeated ferment; it is the *purity* of our constitution that we are so anxious to defend, nor are we more duped by the mightiest, than the pettiest villain in the community.

C H A P. XXXIV.

BUT Mr. Martin, in the midst of all his successes, was destined to experience some trifling mortifications; to have been upon a good footing at Lord Windham's would have been highly flattering to his vanity; he however found that though the visit of ceremony was not denied to him, all possibility of fixing himself in a state of easy familiarity was impracticable---otherwise he had more than once had it in actual contemplation to have paid his devoirs to some one of the ladies.

There are minds, which though perfectly calculated for running through the several gradations, can but ill support the *obtained* eminence --- and such was the mind of Mr. Martin--humble, unassuming, patient, and docile, as he had

K 5 proved

Proved himself in his probationary stages, he was no sooner master of his wishes, than he came forth quite a new man; and continued consequential, yet despicable; overbearing, yet servile; audacious, yet timid, in every part of his conduct, except what immediately related to politics, where he remained unchanged—nor do I think it impossible to discover him under whatever signature he condescends to give himself in the present hour of political disputation.

Lord Windham would frequently lament the great losses England had incurred, in losing the dukes of Cumberland and York—they, he would say, were both of them public-spirited princes, and affectionately attached to the interests of the people—they, from their close alliance to the crown, and intimacy with the community, were at once the safe-guard of the one and the other—to their ear the people would ever

ever have had free access, and by their voices truth, undisguised truth have reached the throne—there was, there could be nothing to separate them from the interest of their sovereign, any more than they were capable of being separated from the true interest of society—of which, as it had been their amusement to obtain certain, nay ocular demonstration, it would have been their highest delight to have faithfully delineated—but they are gone, he would add with a sigh, and have not left their like behind. There were two points which Lord Windham had particularly at heart, but as they wholly related to the lower classes of society, they were wholly disregarded.—Since standing armies were judged necessary for our defence, he would ask why at the period of peace some manufactures could not be established for the employment and better support of them, when their duty did not compel them to subsist merely

K 6 upon

upon their scanty pay?—A generation or two ago, he would observe, their six-pence a day was equal in value to a shilling now; the increased populousness of the country having occasioned the increased price of provisions, a consideration that his humanity could not overlook, and which he conceived the justice of g— ought not: but as it was most undeniable that six-pence was a sufficient charge on the nation, instead of a parliamentary relief he would have proposed a commercial one, which would be no less salutary to them and their families than the nation in general; besides, by this means it was his opinion that the peace and property of society would be greatly secured—for to these houses of industry the disbanded as well as the retained soldiery might repair, and where, in an hour of exigence, we might always know where to find them, instead of drawing them by the severity of their circumstances to violations of those

those laws, in defence of which but a short time before they had so freely shed their blood, and exposing those who were formed for dying bravely to incur the most ignominious punishments. The other particular, that he as a friend to the poor, and the community in general, would have promoted into an establishment, was a fund for the relief of our water-men in the winter season. Can it be equitable, he would say, to compel this set of men, now that the erection of so many bridges has in a great measure deprived them of their livelihood, to engage the same number of apprentices, merely for the purpose of supplying our navy, yet prove unmindful of the distresses each succeeding winter brings along with it? Do we not behold these poor fellows, whose minds we ought to keep unbroken, dragging their boats from one end of our streets to the other, in order to speak those wants we cannot be insensible of? A fund in no degree

degree largely endowed would spare them the mortification of begging alms, and us the disgrace with foreigners of neglecting to provide for those who so bravely fight for us, as they can bear them witness.—Lord Windham was however, for these peculiarities of goodness, frequently suspected by the best bred, because frequently the most unfeeling, not to be perfectly in his right mind;—but he laughed at all that related to himself, and regretted all that was a disadvantage to those he would conceive proper objects of humane attention, nor did he fail to direct his own charities to purposes which he was persuaded was least thought of by the other charitable part of the public. But far be it from me to insinuate, notwithstanding I have thus presumed to dwell upon the oddities of this nobleman's character, that they are in any degree exemplary—every person has his own sentiments for his rule of conduct, and where nature has
not

not bestowed such an abundant portion of the milk of human kindness, we cannot expect so abundantly to trace its ebullitions or operations. I would however, before I enter upon the concluding part of this history, admonish the much loved inhabitants of this island, to attend the lesson of instruction wherever they find it.—A biographist, in humble imitation of the historian, should in the moment that he writes to the heads endeavour to reach the hearts of his readers; nor fail to throw the moral and the useful reflexion in his way when least expected---for many that are calculated to resist all the arguments of the professed censor, or the arrogantly declared reformer, are often led to noble resolutions, by beholding the accidental picture of virtue, of fortitude, of generosity and of mercy:— But to return to my more immediate province.

Mr.

Mr. Davenport, relieved from the disgrace of a bad wife, would gladly have united himself agreeably to his first choice; but if Miss Wentworth had insurmountable scruples with respect to attaching herself to the worthy Leneston, it was still more foreign to her inclination to think of Mr. Davenport; she nevertheless treated him with infinite complaisance, not once supposing herself authorized to be insolent, because she was convinced of the sincerity of his professions: a hint which I could wish the otherwise unexceptionable part of the creation to improve; for the utmost reason or justice can give the most accomplished fair over an admirer, is the right of refusing him, and if she would give a valuable impression of her mind, the mark of benevolence would be most particularly conspicuous, in the mode of refusing him; it is indeed the test of nobleness or meanness of disposition, ingenu-

genuousness, or little pride, generosity,
or tyranny.

All so perfectly dependant upon each other, these families determined to situate themselves where their intercourse should be but seldom interrupted; and an estate happening to be advertised for disposal in the neighbourhood of Wentworth Lodge, it was instantly purchased by Lord Windham; the country for miles round was one universal rejoicing at the news of their intended return; for such was their reputation for, nay, their experienced goodness and munificence, that from their return every one promised themselves either felicity or advantage.

Mr. Leneston, by the persuasion of his friends, now that peace had been some time established, quitted the army; and having found a young fellow of merit, whose prospects were rather limited, recommended him so strongly to his
Colonel

Colonel on this resignation, that he succeeded him both in his commission and that gentleman's favour : nor was it long before they took an everlasting leave of the overgrown county of Middlesex. Wentworth Lodge was enlarged on a plan of Lord Windham's own construction, which for convenience and elegance was highly salutary ; the gardens were enlarged, little groves planted, cascades formed, and serpentine rivulets introduced, not only to improve the scene, but for the laudable purpose of furnishing employment for a number of industrious poor, who considered him as a kind of deity, and whilst their necessities were relieved by their wages, felt their spirits most happily exhilarated by his smiles.

The ladies too had their scheme of bounty to reward the meritorious, and mortify the drones of society ; a fund was raised by them for the encouragement

ment of every branch of honest industry ; the first limited quantity of thread ready for the bleacher, had its premium ; as had also the first pair of stockings knit within a certain period ; the best boy at his book, and the most diligent girl at her needle, were sure to be known and distinguished by the *nobility* at the lodge.—But I forget how preposterous these circumstances must sound to refined ears ; who amongst people of rank now vouchsafe to remember the lower orders of individuals ? it would be to defeat the end of their creation to lift them into consequence ;—born for slaves it is fit they bear the yoke ; unendued with sensibility, all condescension towards them is absurd indulgence, down-right madness ; they have no ideas ; gratitude ! what a ridiculous tribute that must be !—Let people of fashion prove themselves people of spirit ; and unremittingly overlook and despise their inferiors.

Mr.

Mr. Windham's marriage was now declared, and universal congratulations the consequence; the lady and relation soon after dying, Mr. Windham altered the scheme of all his ambition; the *parliament-touch* he had talked of was obtained, and he became an earl.

But he, however, soon found that even a title was insufficient to heal the wounds of integrity, or soften the pangs of disappointed love; nor had his lady much reason to rejoice in her change of condition.—Lost to popularity, that darling support, attacked, depicted, and caricatured by every petty scribbler—The Earl of —— sighed, languished, and sunk under his own feelings, his own reproaches.

But such is the fluctuation of politics, such the unsteadiness of ministerial appointments, and such the consequence of ministerial errors, that this same earl is

is now once more raising his head, from an undenial probability of his again dignifying an elevated station ; he has abilities, he has had experience : much is to undo, much essential to be done ; his reputation is his idol, and happy would it be for this country, if to redeem that, he would effect its redemption.

Lord Windham, indeed, still professes a very mean opinion of the shifting genius : he, poor man, thinks it incumbent, most peculiarly incumbent upon public characters, to have a meaning, a principle in all their actions ; but Lord Windham's judgement will have little weight with the wiser part of the community ; who are well convinced of the utility of an occasional trick, and the advantage of a seasonable conformity.

But

214 VICAR OF BRAY.

But I shall, perhaps, be told that my uncle's character has little or no affinity to that of his celebrated predecessor; I nevertheless affirm the contrary, for, however common the villany of changing hands in political affairs may be, or however venial we may therefore hold the practice, I cannot imagine but that the good pastor, as described in the old song, was capable of all my uncle accomplished, if he had been cast in a similar situation; as a proof of which I have taken the liberty to close this work with the ballad, and hope it will not be unentertaining to my readers.



THE

T H E
V I C A R o f B R A Y:
A B A L L A D.

IN Charles the Second's golden days,
When loyalty no harm meant,
A zealous churchman then I was,
By which I got preferment.

To teach my flock, I never mis'd,
Kings were by God appointed,
And damn'd were they that did resist,
Or curse the Lord's anointed.

*And this is law I will maintain,
And to my dying day will,
That whatsoever King shall reign,
I'll be the Vicar of Bray still.*

When royal James posses'd the crown,
And popery was in fashion,
The penal laws I voted down,
And read the declaration.

The church of Rome I found would fit
Full well my constitution ;
And I had been a Jesuit,
But for the Revolution.

And this, &c.
When William was our King declar'd,
To redress the nation's grievance,
With this new whim I then aver'd,
And swore to him allegiance ;

Old

Old principles I did revoke,
 Set conscience at a distance,
 And prov'd religion was a joke,
 And a jest was non-resistance.

And this, &c.

When glorious Anne became our queen,
 The church of England's glory,
 Another face of things was seen,
 And I became a tory :
 Occasional conformists base,
 I damn'd their moderation,
 And prov'd the church in danger was
 By such prevarication.

And this, &c.

When George in pudding-time came o'er,
 And moderate men look'd big, sir,
 The cat in pan I turn'd once more,
 And so became a whig, sir ;
 By which preferment I procur'd,
 From our great faith's defender ;
 And almost ev'ry day abjur'd
 The Pope and the Pretender.

And this, &c.

The illustrious house of Hanover,
 And protestant succession,
 To them I lustily will cleave,
 While they can keep possession :
 And in my faith no one shall say,
 I any ways do faulter ;
 For George our rightful King shall be
 Until the times do alter.

And this, &c.

F I N I S.

